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Friday, 27 September 1996, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail . . . . (Malaysia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Kamal (Pakistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The Acting President: The first speaker this afternoon is the Minister of State of New Zealand, His Excellency Sir Robin Gray.

Sir Robin Gray (New Zealand): It gives me particular pleasure to address the General Assembly at a session of over which Malaysia has been elected to preside. Our two countries are good friends, and Ambassador Razali is personally known to and respected by us all. New Zealand looks forward to a productive session under his leadership.

In just two weeks New Zealanders face a general election. There are many subjects over which the various political parties differ, but one thing remains quite clear: the support of New Zealanders for the United Nations and the rule of international law embodied in it.

For New Zealand, as for many other countries represented here today — and especially smaller countries — the primary purpose of the United Nations remains to provide for a system of collective security. It brings the nations of the world together in a grand coalition to keep the peace, to help eliminate weapons of mass destruction, to uphold human rights, to encourage good governance, to protect the environment and to promote economic and social development, including by supporting the role of women.

Together, these activities, along with national and regional initiatives, provide the underpinnings of the system of collective security that we want to leave for our children.

For New Zealanders, our confidence in the United Nations was reaffirmed when, two weeks ago, the General Assembly adopted the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. It gave me much satisfaction to sign the Treaty earlier today on behalf of the Government and the people of New Zealand. Agreement on a test ban has been a New Zealand objective for more than three decades and one we promoted in this Assembly, together with Australia and Mexico. It reflects deeply held convictions on the part of all New Zealanders.

New Zealand has argued, and will continue to argue, for a world without nuclear weapons. Our belief that these weapons of mass destruction can and should be eliminated has been reinforced by the experiences of our region as a testing ground for nuclear weapons. I am glad to say it is an era now happily behind us.

For New Zealand, the Treaty represents first of all an end to nuclear testing in our region and worldwide. But even more, it puts real obstacles in the way of any

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State seeking to refine or develop a nuclear arsenal. We have taken a significant step on the way to eliminating nuclear weapons entirely. Now, however, we must look ahead.

The International Court of Justice, in its recent Advisory Opinion on the legality of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, set out our obligation in this regard: the obligation to pursue in good faith and to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament. New Zealand believes that in 1997 all States, including nuclear-weapon States, should pursue negotiations on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament, with the ultimate goals of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

We are better placed to make our contribution to such negotiations because of the recent decision of the Conference on Disarmament to admit New Zealand and 22 other countries as full members. As a reflection of the importance we attach to its ongoing work, my Government has now decided to appoint a full-time Disarmament Ambassador to the Conference in Geneva.

Further steps towards a nuclear-free world are recommended in the report of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, released last month. We hope that report will energize discussions at the national level, particularly in the nuclear-weapon States.

The aspirations of many States to be free of nuclear weapons have found expression in the establishment of what are now four nuclear-weapon-free zones. Taken together, the four relevant treaties have the potential to cover some 114 nations and 1.7 billion people. My Government has given considerable thought to ways in which cooperation between nuclear-weapon-free zones can be advanced. We are working with other Governments on a draft resolution to be submitted to the Assembly at this session, and New Zealand hopes it will receive wide support.

The disarmament arena is only one where the United Nations must continue to address serious challenges to our collective security. When my Government took office in October 1990, the international community faced the challenge presented by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. In the heart of Europe, Yugoslavia was on the path to political disintegration. Few of us imagined then, however, the nightmare of Bosnia, the genocide to come in Rwanda or the mass starvation and anarchy in Somalia. In response, during our term on the Security Council in 1993 and 1994, a record 75,000 United Nations peacekeepers were deployed around the world, and Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was robustly countered by coalition action authorized by the Security Council. New Zealand was part of that coalition and is part of the current efforts to ensure that Iraq complies with subsequent Council decisions. Recent events show that we still need to be vigilant. Iraq must recognize that there are limits to what the international community will tolerate.

New Zealanders also serve in the former Yugoslavia where, while the implementation of the Dayton accords lies primarily with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the United Nations continues to play an important role. Similarly, our personnel serve in Angola and the Middle East.

New Zealanders are staunch supporters of the United Nations role in international peacekeeping, despite the fact that the overall record through the first half of this decade has been mixed. There were successes, such as Cambodia, Mozambique and El Salvador, and there were the disappointments and bitter frustrations of Bosnia, Somalia and Rwanda. I hesitate to call those operations failures. To me, that would be to overlook the positive things they achieved in extremely difficult circumstances and the contributions made by so many dedicated and able people. Those operations will be failures only if we fail to learn from them. I think we have learned.

We have learned that, first, the United Nations must be given the resources required to do the job. Secondly, the Organization must be careful about mixing enforcement tasks with peacekeeping, unless our peacekeepers are appropriately configured from the outset for the higher level of threat.

Thirdly, the Security Council should be wary of adopting resolutions to which the Organization cannot give effect. This creates a very corrosive credibility problem.

My Government also considers that the United Nations must continue its efforts to develop a capacity to respond more rapidly. We commend the proposal to establish a rapidly deployable operational headquarters team and, indeed, have offered to contribute a highly experienced officer to it.

Demining remains an important focus for New Zealand. Mines pose an unacceptable threat to peacekeeping operations and are a longer-term humanitarian and development challenge. The United Nations must make every effort to ensure that the necessary resources are available for demining activities.

We have more than doubled our annual instalment to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance. This is in addition to our continuing contribution of expertise in demining in Cambodia, Mozambique and Angola, as well as here at United Nations Headquarters.

Finally, we do not think the United Nations can write itself out of the script when operations involving a potential enforcement dimension are contemplated. If it did so, it could quickly become irrelevant. The threats to international peace and security in the future are likely to be every bit as difficult as those of the recent past. The United Nations will need to be able to respond effectively, not simply as a rubber stamp for great-Power actions.

The tragic events of recent days in the West Bank and Gaza show that peace there remains elusive. New Zealand calls upon all parties to desist from actions that might derail the Middle East peace process. Painstaking efforts have gone into that process, and it offers a real hope for a long-term solution to the problems that have bedeviled that region. It must be supported and not jeopardized.

Human rights are the foundation of freedom and justice, and the achievement of universal respect for human rights is an essential prerequisite for international peace and security.

In New Zealand we work hard to ensure that our own house is in order. We are committed to ensuring that the rights elaborated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Covenants and other core human rights instruments are a living reality for all New Zealanders, and we are prepared to speak out when we see human rights being violated in other parts of the world. At its heart, our international human rights policy is geared to finding tangible ways of protecting and promoting human rights and good government.

In the Asia-Pacific region we are pleased by the progress the United Nations is making in nurturing human rights frameworks. We are also encouraged by the new levels of cooperation and interaction being achieved by the human rights commissions of the region.

New Zealand also sees a need to support individual countries, international and regional organizations and non-governmental organizations in their work to improve human rights and the quality of governance. To this end the Minister for Foreign Affairs has today announced the establishment of an international good-government programme. This new programme will markedly expand our ability to support good government and human rights capacity-building activities. It will work in tandem with the existing Commonwealth Good Government Fund.

Consistent with United Nations principles, New Zealand has also participated actively in the Action Group of Commonwealth Ministers for the promotion of principles of good governance established at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting at Harare in 1991 and reaffirmed at its Auckland meeting in 1995. For my own part, I have been privileged to represent New Zealand at several of the Action Group's meetings and during its recent mission to Gambia.

Such programmes, with the interlinked goals of social progress and economic development, do not come cheaply. The money spent on United Nations relief and development greatly surpasses that spent on peacekeeping, and so it should.

At the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 it was recognized that substantial new and additional funding would be required for sustainable development and the implementation of Agenda 21, the programme of action that will take us into the next century.

I am pleased to be able to say that by next year New Zealand will have increased its official development assistance by almost one third since Rio. There will be a 24 per cent increase in our funding for United Nations development agencies this year.

1997 will see the five-year review of Agenda 21. At the special session of the General Assembly next June, one important task will be to assess the effectiveness of the bodies and institutions that have been established to advance the aims set out in Agenda 21. The issues are many, and all are important. But we need to focus efforts and produce real results.

In this regard, the Commission on Sustainable Development should have a strengthened role. It should be the forum in which States can work to streamline the environment-and-sustainable- development agenda.

All these challenges facing this unique Organization, and our regard for it, highlight of course the urgent need for reform. In particular, the Security Council must be made more representative of the Organization's membership as it is today, not as it was 50 years ago. Its decision-making procedures must be brought up to date.

Finding a sustainable basis for the financing of the Organization remains long overdue. New Zealand has dedicated itself to reform of both the Secretariat and the intergovernmental machinery, not least through our vigorous commitment to the work of the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System. The report of that group provides a blueprint for action during this session. We also support the Efficiency Board, and have made available to it the services of a New Zealand expert in public-service restructuring.

We believe that New Zealand's record, not only as a prompt contributor of assessments, but also as a country that has demonstrated its commitment to financial reform, places it in a good position to make an effective contribution to the work of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, in which we are seeking membership at this year's session of the General Assembly.

The drive for reform of the United Nations system to make it an effective instrument of the international community for the next 50 years means no part of it can remain immune from scrutiny.

A good deal of attention has been focused on the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Secretariat. We believe there is also scope for increasing the effectiveness of the International Court of Justice. It is 50 years since the ICJ was established as the principal United Nations judicial organ. To mark this important milestone in the international rule of law, we should now finally schedule a conference to adopt the statute for the international criminal court. The creation of a permanent court that will bring justice to victims of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other serious international crimes is surely a priority for us all.

I am grateful to have had this opportunity to reaffirm New Zealand's commitment to this Organization, and to multilateralism, as the means for building a better world.

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece, His Excellency Mr. Theodoros Pangalos, on whom I now call.

Mr. Pangalos (Greece): Allow me to extend the warmest congratulations of my Government to the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session on his election. I would also like to express our deep appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, whose leadership during the fiftieth session was a valuable asset for the Organization.

I also seize this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his dedication to his duties since 1992.

The Foreign Minister of Ireland, as President of the Council of the European Union, delivered a statement to which my Government fully subscribes, as it does to the Union's memorandum. I would like, however, to elaborate further on some issues that are of particular interest to my country.

Let us remember the message delivered by the world leaders during the special commemorative meeting of this body: the Organization needs to undergo a serious reorganization in order to be ready to confront the challenges of the years ahead. The political commitment of the Member States and the contribution of adequate resources constitute two fundamental prerequisites for the success of the United Nations.

Unfortunately, few noteworthy proposals have been put forward concerning the comprehensive modernization effort to enable the Organization to become more efficient and transparent in the fulfilment of its functions while rationalizing the use of its resources.

It is the Member States that have endowed the United Nations with its current features. Even if the Organization's administrative weaknesses were fully remedied, the power of extensive correction and long-overdue reform lies not in this building, but in our own capitals.

At this stage, we are faced with two alternatives: either curtail demands on the United Nations, giving it a reasonable chance of carrying out reduced policies within its existing resources, or recognize the need to improve its capacities and grant it greater functions, as well as the necessary means. Greece strongly advocates the second path, because the need for the world Organization is growing, not shrinking. Year by year, we move closer to menacing demographic, socio-economic and ecological thresholds. The only chance we have to deal with transnational problems is to work out transnational responses. We need to cooperate constructively towards common ends.

It would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the United Nations to face the current financial crisis if Member States were to deprive the world Organization of the resources and assets that they have contractually pledged of their own free will. In this context, it should be stressed yet again that no amount of savings will, by itself, permit the United Nations to be solvent, and that none of the Member States, in particular those that play a major role in the Organization's decision-making process and in the definition of its activities, should have second thoughts when it comes to footing their part of the bill.

Let us be clear: the whole reform is endangered by the looming atmosphere of imminent financial collapse. Even worse, the United Nations, and all the principles that it stands for, are exposed to the danger of being discredited, perhaps forever, even in the eyes of its warmest supporters. This is a much more fundamental issue than improvements to specific parts of the system, welcome and needed though the latter may be.

Earlier this year, the European Union outlined a comprehensive package to address the financial crisis. Furthermore, Greece, on a national basis, responded positively to the Secretary-General's appeal and decided to increase its annual contribution to the peacekeeping-operations budget, thus moving on a voluntary basis from Group C to Group B of countries that contribute to the financing of the Organization's peacekeeping activities. As a result, our contribution will increase by 500 per cent by the year 2000, when the process of gradual reallocation will have been completed.

It has become increasingly fashionable to argue that the idea of a world community is alive in the human imagination, though not yet in the world of action; that the concept of collective security has failed to take root because it does not reflect the spirit of the age; that the public multilateral approach cannot be effective in conflict resolution, because there are no collective solutions to individual crises; and that behind-the-scenes diplomacy, which pursues relatively modest goals, will always be better at keeping conflict within reasonable limits, because it will compromise between what justice demands and what circumstances permit.

In the light of past and recent experience, the Greek people certainly do not have immoderate illusions in this regard. The case of Cyprus is a striking example of the inability of the international community to ensure implementation of clear-cut United Nations resolutions and to tackle the problem of the ongoing occupation of one Member State by another following an act of military aggression. To cite just one other example, Greece is threatened with war in the event it applies the provisions of the Convention on the Law of the Sea, which has been signed by all Member States, except for the one that made it clear that it would not hesitate to use force for the maintenance and defence of its vital interests.

However, it would be totally wrong to discard multilateralism just because of the persistence of attitudes that assuage consciences without solving the problems. We have to strike a positive balance between vision and reality, because no society, and certainly not the international community, can aspire to human, economic and social development without a stable and legally appropriate framework.

Throughout its existence, the United Nations has not just constituted the main, if not the only, incarnation of the global spirit of hope. The principles enshrined in its Charter have established a code of conduct for States, which have the duty to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security, to refrain from the threat or use of force, and to settle disputes by exclusively peaceful means and in accordance with international law. Moreover, the Organization itself has often been a successful instrument for the prevention and management of conflicts.

If power politics are allowed to be deployed in the pursuit of exclusive and narrow interests in a climate of confrontation, if the world's resources are shared on the basis of military power rather than of international treaties and conventions, if priority is not given to international law and international cooperation, and if we attempt to evade the responsibilities that we have all undertaken under the Charter, however appealing and convenient that might appear in the short term, we will sow the seeds of chaos, anarchy and rapid disintegration. The United Nations offers the only framework in which to achieve the important objective of enforcing international legitimacy, provided, of course, that it improves its capacity to deal with international problems and especially to create an effective mechanism of collective security.

Greek-Turkish relations illustrate the need for such an improvement. The Greek Government sincerely desires the establishment of normal good-neighbourly relations based on the principles of international law and respect for international treaties, which, however, Turkey seems determined to ignore. The Turkish Parliament unanimously adopted a resolution on 8 June 1995, which empowers the Government to use military force in case Greece exercises its legal right to extend its territorial waters in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Moreover, the Turkish Government adopted the contents of this resolution in direct violation of the United Nations Charter, which forbids the use of force or the threat of the use of force in international relations.

Even worse, in contravention of the Treaty of Lausanne and the Treaty of Paris, Turkey laid claim at the beginning of this year to the Imia islets in the Aegean Sea, which are Greek sovereign territory, and even supported this claim by military means. This sets a very dangerous precedent for the entire region. Turkey is attempting to subvert the territorial status quo established more than 70 years ago and is backing its claims with the use of armed force. Furthermore, the Foreign Minister, Mrs. Ciller, in her capacity as Prime Minister, claimed in February that 1,000 Greek islands and islets in the Aegean are Turkish, and that if Greece attempted to contest this "fact", Turkey would consider it a *casus belli*. A few days later she raised the number to 3,000.

Greece has repeatedly called on Turkey to have recourse to the International Court of Justice concerning the Imia islets. Turkey, on the contrary, has lately challenged Greek sovereignty, even over the inhabited island of Gávdhos, south-west of Crete in the Libyan Sea, and despite the outrageous nature of this claim, it has not unequivocally withdrawn it.

We see that Turkey wilfully violates the most basic principles of the international legal order and far from exhibiting any self-restraint, puts forth ever more provocative claims against Greece. My country, on the other hand, not only scrupulously respects international law and treaties, but also demonstrates great self-restraint in its relations with Turkey. There is no better example of this than the fact that Greece has chosen not to react forcibly to the massive violations of Greek airspace and the constant overflying of Greek territory on the part of Turkish warplanes. This responsible stance should not, however, be misinterpreted in any way. On the contrary, and despite the absence of any real will on the part of international community to uphold the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter, Greece is absolutely determined to protect its sovereign rights by all legitimate means, and the threat of force will not dissuade it from doing so.

As to the Cyprus issue, it is widely admitted that the status quo is unacceptable. Nevertheless, no progress has been achieved in the course of the last 22 years. Turkey, provocatively defying consecutive Security Council resolutions is still occupying by force a considerable part of the island. At the same time, Turkey is flagrantly violating basic human rights and freedoms of the Cypriot people, while engaging in systematic plunder of the island's cultural and religious heritage. Moreover, Turkey continues to systematically promote the illegal and condemned practice of establishing settlers on the island.

The time has come to reach a just and viable solution to the Cyprus problem based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and providing for a bicommunal bizonal federation with a single sovereignty and international personality and a single citizenship, while safeguarding the independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus.

The prospect of Cyprus joining the European Union is indeed an important new development, which creates conditions that should facilitate a comprehensive settlement of the issue. The period until the start of the accession talks should in no way be left unexploited. At the same time, the Greek Government welcomes any new ideas and initiatives, whatever their origin may be, which would contribute to a solution within the framework of the United Nations resolutions. A basic factor for achieving a breakthrough, in our opinion, is the coordination of all initiatives by the Secretary-General and his Special Representative.

Meanwhile, the tension lingering on the island involves serious risks and creates additional complications which render the efforts for a settlement more arduous. Turkey and the pseudo-state, taking advantage of a peaceful demonstration by Greek Cypriots, proceeded a few weeks ago, with the active involvement of the extremist terrorist Turkish group the Grey Wolves, to implement a meticulously prepared plan which was crowned by the murder in cold blood of two young Cypriots and the injuries sustained by many others, United Nations peacekeepers included.

The aim was undoubtedly to demonstrate the existence of an alleged international boundary on the island. It was also to support the Turkish claim that the two communities cannot live peacefully side by side and that the presence of the Turkish occupation forces is therefore necessary for the protection of the Turkish Cypriot community. But the truth is that both communities can indeed coexist peacefully. So it was felt necessary to call in extremist elements from mainland Turkey in order to implement this scenario and to try to create mistrust between the communities.

In the wake of those recent tragic developments we steadfastly believe that the adoption of President Clerides' proposal for the demilitarization of Cyprus, a proposal whose importance has already been widely acknowledged, will decisively contribute to defusing tension and will at the same time meet the security requirements of all communities living on the island.

In a broader context, the search for a just and viable solution to this complex international problem requires decisiveness and perseverance. If the bicommunal dialogue is to have any chance of success, a minimum common ground is indispensable, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions. But if the other party does not show the necessary political will, the international community should at last live up to its political and moral responsibilities. It should take action without delay and try to convince Turkey to abide by international law and withdraw its troops from the island.

With regard to the Balkans, Greece's policy in the area is guided by the principles of the maintenance of stability, peace and security, the inviolability of internationally recognized borders and full respect for human rights, including those relating to national minorities, in accordance with the relevant principles of the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Greece supports the establishment of good-neighbourly relations and the development of close economic ties with and among all Balkan countries. At the same time, our systematic cooperation with the countries of the Balkan peninsula contributes to the achievement of their long-term goals of economic and political rapprochement with the European Union and its institutions. We fully support and actively promote the European orientation of these countries.

Moreover, Greece has supported all international initiatives aimed at further promoting Balkan regional cooperation, such as the conference of ministers of southeastern Europe — which convened this year in Sofia and which will meet again in Thessaloniki in June of next year — the European Royaumont initiative and the United States southeast European cooperative initiative. We believe that in their complementarity, these efforts contribute to the stability, security and prosperity of the area.

In the context of regional cooperation I should also mention the Greek initiative for trilateral meetings of the ministers for foreign affairs of Greece, Bulgaria and Romania, which took place at Ioannina, Greece in 1995, and, after that, in Varna, Bulgaria, on 16 and 17 March 1996. The aim of these meetings is to bolster subregional cooperation, mainly in the fields of transport, telecommunications and energy, as well as in the development of infrastructure.

Greece was one of the founding members of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) organization. Greece recently became a member of the Parliamentarian Assembly of the BSEC and participates actively in this initiative that encompasses countries from both the Balkans and the Black Sea area and which can make an important contribution to the development and stability of the wider region. One important achievement among others is the establishment in Thessaloniki of the BSEC Bank of Trade and Development which, is expected to start functioning soon and contribute to the implementation of specific projects of great interest to the region.

I will now try to give a brief assessment of my country's bilateral relations with each individual Balkan country.

In its relations with Albania, Greece actively pursues the development of good-neighbourliness and cooperation in all fields, based on the respect of sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as full respect for human rights, including those relating to national minorities, in accordance with the principles of the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The Greek minority in Albania constitutes a bridge of friendship and cooperation between the two countries. To this end, encouraging steps are being undertaken by the Albanian Government. Greece has actively supported Albania in its efforts for reconstruction and development and has backed its association with international organizations. The visit last March of the President of the Hellenic Republic to Tirana and the signing of,a treaty of friendship and cooperation between the two countries opened a new chapter in their relations for the benefit of the two peoples.

Greek-Bulgarian relations have continued their fruitful and constructive development marked by exchanges of visits at all levels. Recent crucially important agreements — among them one concerning the opening of three new border check-points and another on the waters of the Nestos river — give true meaning to their cooperation in the field of infrastructure, while being of decisive significance for the future development of the region's European orientation.

Greece's relations with Romania have reached a high level during the last years. Visits at all levels, including one by the President of the Hellenic Republic, have taken place frequently and close and broad cooperation in the economic and cultural fields has been achieved.

Greece's goal is the establishment of close and friendly relations with all countries that have emerged from the former Yugoslavia. The traditionally close relations of Greece with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will be further strengthened through enhanced economic cooperation, especially following the suspension of the United Nations embargo, which inflicted heavy losses on the Greek economy also. A multi-faceted development of their cooperation will help to redress the past.

Mr. Erwa (Sudan), Vice-President took the Chair.

Greece's relations with Croatia and Slovenia have followed a steady upward trend. Greece has a great interest in the dynamic development of its relations with those two countries in all fields, and I am glad to acknowledge their positive response as well. With regard to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece fully supported the Dayton Peace Agreement and has actively participated in the efforts to implement it fully. Timely and full respect of this Agreement is the best guarantee of the preservation of the integrity, sovereignty and multiethnic character of that Republic. The efforts of the international community to achieve peace in Bosnia must succeed. First must come the constitution and proper functioning of the joint organs of the Republic in order to expedite the return to full normalization of life in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Greece has established diplomatic relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina and participates in reconstruction plans with substantial economic aid.

Greece expresses the wish that negotiations taking place with The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia under the auspices of Mr. Vance on the issue of the name of that Republic will finally meet with success, so as to open the way for a full normalization and the dynamic development of relations between our two countries.

The Middle East peace process is currently at a critical crossroads. It is with shock and dismay that my Government is following the latest dramatic developments in the West Bank and Gaza. We express our deepest sorrow at the deaths that have occurred and our grave concern about the future of the peace process. Greece urges all parties to demonstrate the utmost restraint and to refrain from any action which might lead to a further escalation of violence in the occupied territories. In particular, they must step back from any action that is bound to rekindle deep-rooted sentiments of mistrust and enmity on both sides.

There is no alternative for the peoples in the region other than a peace based on the principle of land for peace. There is no alternative to the peace process. If this process stagnates, there is a danger that it will unravel. There is an urgency for both parties to resume efforts to fulfil earnestly their agreed obligations. Greece calls on the parties to resume negotiations immediately on the basis of the principles already accepted by them in the Madrid and Oslo agreements. We consider it of the utmost importance that the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement be fully implemented, and that the talks on the final status of the Palestinian territories — including Jerusalem — are speedily concluded together with the solution of the two outstanding problems, namely, security for all and social and economic development.

Failure to proceed could lead to grave consequences as far as peace and stability in the whole region are concerned. Peoples of the region should be guaranteed a secure life within internationally recognized and safe boundaries. In this context, Greece believes that the international community must spare no effort to create a solid basis for the political and economic survival of the Palestinian National Authority, thereby providing a source of hope for the Palestinian people. Greece will continue to support this effort actively. We are of the view that the peace process could be substantially promoted if those States of the region which are directly concerned would join forces with those actively participating in it. We urge the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) on Lebanon. Greece, who has actively participated in the Middle East peace process since its beginnings in Madrid, will continue to offer every possible support and assistance to the bilateral and multilateral negotiations towards a comprehensive, final and just peace.

The expansion and improvement of the representative character of the Security Council constitutes one of the most urgent needs for reform in the United Nations system. While ongoing discussions have been focusing on adding to the permanent membership in order to reflect changes in the global balance since 1945, as well as on the right of veto and its use, we should not disregard the long-term beneficial effects of allowing more nations to participate in the decision-making process of this critically important body.

In this context, the Greek Government has decided to present its candidature for one of the two non-permanent seats allocated to the Group of Western European and other States in the Security Council for the period 1999-2000. It should be noted that Greece, a founding member of the United Nations, is one of the very few Western countries that have served only once as a non-permanent member of the Council, and that was more than 40 years ago. Greece is located at a crossroads in the Balkans and southeastern Europe, a region that should be given the opportunity to be represented on and to participate actively in the Council. My country's firm and unconditional commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes, in accordance with the fundamental principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, offers all the necessary guarantees that its election will indeed serve the cause of international peace and security.

On the eve of the third millennium, an affirmation of peace and cohesion among peoples must, more than ever before, constitute the primary legacy to bequeath to future generations. It befits the United Nations to be the depository and guarantor of this legacy. It rests with Member States to make solidarity, security and development their watchwords for concrete action and their battle cry in the fight against discord and injustice.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I call next on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain, His Excellency Mr. Abel Matutes.

Mr. Matutes (Spain) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I would like first of all to express to Ambassador Razali my cordial congratulations on his election as President of the General Assembly. I am firmly convinced that his qualities will enable us to solve successfully the central questions of particular relevance included in our agenda. Permit me as well in these opening comments to extend my fraternal gratitude to Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal for his rigorous and able leadership during the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. I would also like to express my respect to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, whose efforts at the head of the Secretariat in this particularly difficult moment Spain considers very positive and worthy of our support.

The Spanish delegation fully subscribes to the statement made a few days ago by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland on behalf of the European Union, in which he set out the common goals and priorities of Europe for the present session of the General Assembly.

I would now like to refer in detail to various issues of particular interest to my country. First of all, however, I wish to reaffirm the strong commitment of Spain and its new Government to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. On 26 June 1945 at San Francisco, at a time when mankind still had not recovered from the horrors of the Second World War, the representatives of the peoples of the United Nations expressed their firm resolve to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. They also reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights; in the dignity and worth of the human person; and in the equal rights of men and nations, both large and small.

Fifty-one years later, when the necessary conditions for a new international order based on cooperation and solidarity among nations have finally been met, the commitments made in San Francisco take on renewed standing. The United Nations, in fact, constitutes at present the best instrument at mankind's disposal to face and solve — jointly, on the basis of dialogue and solidarity among Member States — the global challenges confronting mankind at the end of the millennium.

We must make sure that our political commitment to the Organization is manifested in actions, not only by making available the necessary financial resources, but also through the active search for consensus solutions for the reform of the United Nations within the various working groups of the General Assembly. Our Organization, which was designed to respond to both global challenges and to the needs of its Member States, will not be able to play its double role in the coming century unless it can count on a sound, solid and stable financial basis. Convinced of this need, Spain, the ninth-largest contributor to the budget of the Organization, pays promptly and in full its assessed contributions.

When we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations with the renewed commitment of all the Member States to the principles of the Charter, we all concurred on the need to adapt the Organization to the new international situation by enhancing its efficiency through an in-depth reform which will revitalize and strengthen it. Obviously, carrying out this task means the continuation and the deepening of the necessary rationalization and savings measures already undertaken by the Secretariat. In this respect, the approval at the last session of the General Assembly of the programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997, has given Spain satisfaction.

We are aware today more than ever before, of the interrelated nature of the problems confronting the international community and of impossibility for Member States of solving them individually. This is why there is no doubt that it is within the framework of the United Nations where we must bring together efforts in order to face in solidarity the many crises which menace the world.

The international community certainly cannot remain impassive before the magnitude of problems such as the ones faced by the African continent. This year we have witnessed terrifying massacres — such as those in Liberia — and the displacement of people in the Great Lakes region, particularly in Burundi where we continue to witness a terrible and tragic spectacle.

Africa is not, however, a continent entirely and inevitably abandoned to hopelessness. There are countries in which the tenacious efforts of their leaders and the courage of their peoples allow them to embrace hope. The return to the rule of law, the establishment of solid democracies and respect for human rights are the way to establish the foundations of a sustained and sustainable development which will ensure the welfare of all Africans.

The Government of Spain has followed with great attention the developments in the Middle East — focused in the peace process between Arabs and Israelis — in which the question of Palestine continues to be the central point. We are following with great concern the serious events that have taken place in recent days in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, and we wish to reiterate our call to the parties involved to abstain from all acts of provocation and violence that could lead to a new escalation of tension which could jeopardize the peace process.

Furthermore, the Israeli elections held in May and the establishment of the new Government became the basic points of reference for the assessment of this complex issue and for the analysis of its future prospects. After a brief period of uncertainty, the Israeli Government has clearly stated its intention to honour fully the contents of the agreements concluded in Oslo and Washington in the spirit of the principles of Madrid.

Such a positive statement of intentions would have to be followed immediately by concrete and tangible progress, which would strengthen the credibility of the peace process as the only valid alternative to attain peaceful coexistence in the region.

There are still many problems to be solved. On the one hand, it is of course necessary to preserve and strengthen the safety of civilians from the blind and ruthless violence of terrorism; on the other, the closure of the Palestinian territories, the delay in redeployment of the Israeli Army in Hebron and the policy of settlements represent serious obstacles for progress in the peace process.

On the basis of the Florence Declaration issued by the European Union, I avail myself of this opportunity firmly to reiterate the commitment of Spain to the Middle East peace process as the only way to solve this question. In this respect, my Government will continue to work actively, at the national level and within the European Union, to promote the cause of peace and understanding among the peoples of the region.

On a broader level, I wish to express my satisfaction at the initial achievements of the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue. The Spanish Government's priority objective is to contribute to the balanced and harmonious development of the three dimensions of this process: political, economic and human. To this end, it will be necessary to maintain and enhance the "spirit of Barcelona" shown by all countries participating in the Ministerial Conference that my country had the honour of hosting last November.

In connection with the question of Western Sahara, I must express the concern of the Spanish Government at the suspension of the voter-identification operation and the blocking of the settlement plan. In this respect, I wish to recall before this Assembly Spain's principled position, according to which the question of Western Sahara will be solved permanently only through the exercise of the right of self-determination by the people of Western Sahara in a free referendum with international guarantees.

The recent elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina have ended a cycle in the process of implementation of the Dayton Agreement that was marked by an inevitable predominance of military over civilian aspects. Peace has become a reality in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the absence of confrontation is tangible evidence of the success of the multinational military operation. However, along with this success has been an absence of the necessary reconciliation between the parties and the restoration of mutual confidence.

Since the onset of the conflict, Spain has contributed to its solution with a substantial military presence in the United Nations Protection Force, subsequently renewed in the multinational, Implementation Force. My Government intends to continue supporting stability and reconciliation in the region as well as the United Nations efforts along those lines.

The consolidation of democratic Governments, growing respect for human rights and economic and social progress are a tangible reality in and a stimulus for the future of Latin America, a continent to which Spain is linked by solid historical ties of mutual friendship and confidence. We are particularly gratified by the positive developments in Central America, where the consolidated advances of democracy and the increasing stability of peace demonstrate that efforts to promote the rule of law, good governance and respect for human rights are finally having tangible effects on the lives of the people.

I wish to underline, from this rostrum, Spain's commitment to peacekeeping operations. My Government firmly intends to continue contributing to these operations. I wish to pay my warmest and most sincere tribute to the men and women involved in all these operations for their altruistic and selfless work in conditions of extreme difficulty and high risk, which sometimes has meant sacrificing their lives in the interest of peace.

The United Nations peacekeeping operations have become a cornerstone of the activity of our Organization. I wish to highlight here the important momentum given by the Secretary-General in his "An Agenda for Peace" to the development and deepening of new concepts of preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping.

The role of the United Nations in the decolonization process, particularly in the definition of its general principles, to which Spain adheres unequivocally, has been fundamental. The current membership of this General Assembly clearly demonstrates that the process has been one of the great achievements of our time.

In fact, the main phase of decolonization ended some time ago. However, anachronistic colonial situations persist that ought not to be forgotten. One of the priority objectives of the Spanish Government is the decolonization of Gibraltar. Through its resolutions, this General Assembly pointed the way to a decolonization process which, based on the principle of territorial integrity, should be carried out through bilateral negotiations between the United Kingdom, the Colony's administrative Power and Spain, the State in whose territory the Colony is located. The Spanish Government will carry out with the greatest flexibility, but also the greatest firmness, the future bilateral negotiations with the United Kingdom on the basis of the Brussels Declaration of November 1984, with the clear aim of moving forward in the process to culminate in the restoration of Spain's full territorial integrity, generously safeguarding the interests of the Colony's population and convinced of the urgent need to bring an end to the anachronism of the existence of a colony of one European Union member State in the territory of another friendly and allied member State.

Spain is pleased to have fulfilled its aspiration of becoming a full member of the Conference on Disarmament. In this capacity, we will continue to support the enlargement of the Conference to include other candidates still hoping to join.

We are pleased that the General Assembly adopted by an overwhelming majority the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which I have had the honour to sign on behalf of my country. Spain will participate in the network of seismological centres set up for the international verification of compliance with the Treaty and will support the early start-up of the Treaty organization.

Universal adherence to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons continues to be a priority objective, along with the other initiatives in the field of nuclear disarmament.

Spain, one of the first signatories to ratify the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, is also pleased that the figure of 65 ratifications necessary for its entry into force is about to be reached. We trust that all the signatory States that have yet to do so will deposit their instruments of ratification as soon as possible.

My country is carrying out the necessary procedures to ratify the new Protocol IV on blinding laser weapons and we are making every effort to put an end to the tragic effects of anti-personnel mines.

I referred at the beginning of my statement to the need, which I know is shared, to proceed with the reform, revitalization and strengthening of the United Nations. We must make our Organization the centre for harmonizing efforts to promote respect for international law, world peace and equality for all, streamlining the mechanisms of the Charter and removing the political and logistical obstacles that all too often hinder its work.

As part of the institutional reform, the process of expanding and reforming the Security Council stands out. It is well known that Spain supports a moderate increase in the membership of the Council as the result of a considered negotiating process and with the final aim of enhancing the legitimacy of its actions.

On the other hand, "An Agenda for Development" must be a key element in this reform process and the culmination of the series of major conferences focusing on the integral development of the individual that have been held in recent years.

In the general context of this common task of reforming the United Nations, I should like in particular to refer to the new measures, adopted by this Assembly in resolution 50/227, on restructuring and revitalization in the economic, social and other fields. These measures reaffirm the unequivocal will of all countries significantly to improve the work of the Economic and Social Council as the central mechanism for coordinating and supervising United Nations activities in the economic and social fields.

As an example of Spain's commitment to the development activities of the Organization, I should like to recall that, in the past year, my country has concluded a host of bilateral agreements with various bodies of the United Nations system for the funding of specific projects for developing countries.

The Rio Summit was a milestone in the history of the fight against environmental deterioration and established the basis for a concept of sustainable development that does not compromise the welfare of future generations. However, the health of our planet is far from being as good as it ought to be. We must take advantage of the forthcoming special session of this Assembly to give new impetus to the joint efforts being made to protect the environment, the true common heritage of humankind.

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the World Conference on Human Rights defined the promotion and protection of human rights as a priority objective of the international community. Spain fully subscribes to this principle. The promotion and protection of human rights are in themselves ineluctable necessities, and the survival of many, many human beings depends on their effective implementation. Sustainable development for all is not feasible without institutions that help in the realization of human rights.

In this regard, the High Commissioner for Human Rights should have more resources at hand to continue his laudable work on restructuring the Centre for Human Rights. On the other hand, defending human rights is particularly important where the weakest people, those most needing protection and self-defence, are involved. In this context, Spain believes that we should capitalize on the stimulus of the World Congress on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children held recently in Stockholm, to promote through this Organization the most rigorous and comprehensive protection of minors.

In the final phase of the League of Nations, an attempt was made, unfortunately without success, to implement the trilogy of arbitration-security-disarmament. The Government of Spain is convinced that the prohibition of the use and threat of use of force must be accompanied by a general provision in international law making recourse to jurisdictional channels mandatory for the settlement of disputes. It was for this reason that, in a unilateral declaration of 15 October 1990, our Government, the Government of Spain, recognized as compulsory, *ipso facto* and without special agreement, the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice, as provided for in the Statute of the Court.

It is true that the United Nations cannot solve all the problems of humankind. But our Organization can look back with the certainty that its role, in the past and in the present, has not been and is not insignificant and that, for many regions of our planet, the present and the future would be different, harsher and more forlorn without the United Nations.

For this reason, I could not conclude without reiterating the firmest and most rigorous commitment of Spain to the United Nations.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico, His Excellency Mr. José Angel Gurria Treviño.

Mr. Gurria Treviño (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Let me begin by conveying to the President my warmest congratulations on his election as President of this session of the General Assembly, which is recognition, not just of his personal qualities, but also of the leading role Malaysia is called on to play in a part of the world that is characterized by the rapid pace of its economic development and where we are engaging in joint efforts as members of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council.

My country wishes to express its recognition of the spirit of rationality and moderation that has marked the way in which the President has discharged his duties in this period of restructuring as part of the complex task of maintaining peace as the essential prerequisite for ensuring a more just world free from discrimination of any kind and aberrant xenophobia. As this is the moment of truth for the United Nations, we wish to express our hope that the work he has done in guiding this Organization so far will continue so as to consolidate the restructuring process.

In the face of the two options that exist for resolving the constant and recurrent crises that afflict the world — law and justice on the one hand, force and violence on the other — Mexico has always opted for the former.

We are here not to engage in a mere ritual act, but to reiterate our full commitment to this common effort that we initiated half a century ago. This commitment has to be renewed every day, because peace and security are not free gifts bestowed once and for all, but values that have to be conquered and maintained from day to day.

A year ago, the world's leaders came together in this forum to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of our Organization. They reaffirmed the validity of the principles and purposes embodied in the Charter of the United Nations and agreed on new parameters for our collective activity. The complex effort made in 1996 to ensure a proper follow-up to them must continue to be our target for the coming year.

Although not with the forcefulness and clarity that would be justified by current law and demanded by the international community, the International Court of Justice recognized, in an Advisory Opinion of July this year, that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons run counter to international law. The Court also emphasized that

> "there exists an obligation on all States to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control."

The General Assembly must give immediate effect to this by urging the initiation of negotiations on the subject in the Conference on Disarmament.

While we welcome this ruling, we do not agree with another assertion of the Court within the Opinion that the threat or use of nuclear weapons could be legal in the extreme circumstance of self-defence.

The Treaty of Tlatelolco, which Mexico promoted and for which it acts as depositary, was the first legal instrument specifically to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated region. Mexico will continue to encourage the strengthening of the regime established by this Treaty, which has undoubtedly served as a precedent for other treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones throughout the world.

Mexico welcomes the recent addition of the new South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone to those already existing in the South Pacific and in Africa. We hope that we shall soon be able to add another nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, which would undoubtedly help to promote détente in that area. We firmly support Brazil's initiative to proclaim the southern hemisphere of our planet a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

On 24 September, just a few days ago, Mexico signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Despite the fact that its structure is not entirely satisfactory, particularly with respect to its entry into force, we signed it because we believe that it is a vital step in a programme of action for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, the ultimate objective of our efforts in this connection. Mexico and 27 other countries members of the Conference on Disarmament have already submitted a draft programme that we hope can be considered as soon as possible. If we make enough progress in this direction, it might even be possible to overcome one of the main obstacles to the entry into force of the CTBT, which is currently being hindered by those obstacles mentioned earlier. Meanwhile, until the Treaty — on which we worked for almost two years of negotiations — comes into force, we urge all countries to guide their actions in accordance with its text, even before its formal entry into force.

It is a matter of great concern that the two Powers acknowledged to possess chemical weapons have postponed ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction, which took us 20 years to negotiate and requires only two more ratifications to enter fully into force. We shall be initiating consultations with a view to submitting a draft resolution on this subject. We urge the United States Congress and the Russian Federation to ratify the Convention as soon as possible.

Also on the subject of disarmament, we wish to draw attention to the fact that the President of Mexico, Mr. Ernesto Zedillo, recently made two proposals at the Rio Group summit in Cochabamba, Bolivia. The first concerned the need to adopt a convention against the illegal arms trade, which relates directly to the struggle in which we are all engaged against drug trafficking, crime and terrorism. The second concerned the desirability of adopting measures for the control of conventional offensive weapons in Latin America with a view to avoiding arms races that would divert resources essential to our economic development.

We welcome the Canadian initiative, to which Mexico gives its unreserved support, regarding the initiation of consultations with a view to securing, as speedily as possible, a total ban on the deployment, transfer, production and stockpiling of anti-personnel landmines. We believe the matter to be both important and urgent. Accordingly, we propose that this Assembly consider this issue in that light.

It is precisely because we do not see peace as the mere absence of war that we believe that international peace and security must be embodied in development and equity. Peace is inseparable from development; security is inseparable from prosperity. If we sow today for development, we shall reap the peace, security and international harmony that must mark the world of the next millennium.

Accordingly, Mexico enthusiastically supports the work of the United Nations and its specialized agencies on economic and social issues and, in particular, the adoption of an agenda for development as the basis of its efforts to eradicate poverty.

That is why we view with growing concern the fact that, in supposed support of freedom and democracy, action is being taken in the opposite direction through the adoption of laws in the field of trade — the nerve centre of contemporary progress — that are extraterritorial in scope and in complete disagreement with the fundamental principles of international law. I would draw the Assembly's attention to the opinion of the Inter-American Juridical Committee of the Organization of American States, distributed in document A/51/394, on the subject of the so-called Helms-Burton Act. It argues convincingly that this Act is not in keeping with international law. It is neither by means of blockades or exclusions, nor by the application of sanctions on third countries that democracy and human rights can be promoted. Dialogue, inclusion in multilateral forums, trade, investment and the exchange of information and persons have always proven to be the best way to disseminate the values we all share.

Drug trafficking has attained unprecedented levels worldwide, to the point where it has become one of the most serious threats to the integrity of societies and the very security of nations. Despite the vast resources directed by Governments towards combating illicit drugs, the power of the drug traffickers is increasing, as is the number of victims claimed by drug addiction and the collateral damage caused to the social environment and the economy. There is an urgent need to draw up and put into effect measures and strategies which, on the basis of international cooperation and shared responsibility, will make it possible to launch a comprehensive attack on this phenomenon and to do away with partial and subjective evaluations in rating the level of compliance of each Government in combating drug trafficking, or, still worse, in making use of this rating as a political weapon and pressure tactic.

We trust that, in the course of this session, the General Assembly will take a fundamental step to intensify the fight against drug trafficking by convening in 1998, on the recommendation of the Economic and Social Council, a special session to assess the state of international cooperation in combating the production, sale, demand, trafficking and unlawful distribution of narcotics, psychotropic substances and related activities. Once the draft resolution on this issue is adopted, we shall have to get down to the task of preparing an appropriate agenda for that special session, incorporating the specific ideas put forward in the Economic and Social

Council and in this Assembly. In this connection, the statement made on 23 September by the President of Colombia, Dr. Ernesto Samper Pizano, is of special interest.

Mexico recognizes and scrupulously respects the sovereign right of every nation to determine the rules and conditions for the admission of foreign workers to its territory. Nevertheless, the situation of our nationals in foreign countries has become a source of legitimate concern to all sectors of society in my country in response to the emergence of disturbing outbreaks of racism and xenophobia in some countries to which migratory flows are directed. We firmly reject all actions or omissions on the part of national and local authorities in the recipient countries that may contribute to creating or exacerbating an atmosphere of violence and intolerance against such workers and their families. In our view, the mere existence of such a climate runs counter to the basic assumption of respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all. Mexico believes that this complex problem must be approached in a way that goes beyond mere measures of repression and humiliation, but is rather comprehensive, objective, broad in scope and responsive to regional and subregional characteristics.

My country is convinced that the early entry into force of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families is certain to constitute an appropriate framework for the protection of the rights of millions of people who emigrate in search of better living conditions. Moreover, we believe that it is necessary to draw up, as part of the effort to protect the human rights of migrants, minimum rules that will protect them in any recipient country, regardless of their legal status and of the protection afforded them by the laws of the country to which they emigrate. We shall be submitting proposals in this regard at the next session of the Commission on Human Rights.

Meanwhile, Mexico has been making a major effort to improve the treatment and protection of the migrants entering our territory across the southern border. Moreover, the Mexican Government has recently taken a decision to regularize the migratory status of more than 30,000 refugees, most of them Guatemalan, who have settled in camps in the States of Campeche and Quintana Roo under the auspices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In a joint effort with all the countries of Central America — including Belize and Panama — and the United States and Canada, Mexico has embarked on a campaign to combat and punish illegal trafficking in persons, which has now taken on the attributes of international organized crime. We are also working to pass legislation at the congressional level to increase the penalties and lengthen the sentences for those found guilty of this illegal trafficking.

As the Heads of State and Government of the so-called Group of 16, of which Mexico is a member, indicated on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, it is vital that we strengthen the multilateral approach to solving the problems that affect the community as a whole. We view with particular concern the lack of substantive progress in the various working groups responsible for examining the main aspects of the reform of the Organization, and for this reason we should like to propose that efforts be concentrated in the following areas.

The capacity of the United Nations to prevent conflicts and resolve those that already exist must be enhanced. This would include, among other actions, breaking the deadlock in the reform of the Security Council, whose primary responsibility is the maintenance of international peace and security. Secondly, measures should be taken to strengthen the mechanisms for resolving conflicts and disputes by peaceful means through a convention on the subject. And, finally, the role of the Secretary-General in conflict prevention should be strengthened. An example of what action by the Secretary-General can achieve is the important agreement signed in Mexico City on 19 September between the Government of Guatemala and the general command of the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca, which will make a significant contribution to the attainment of lasting peace in that country, and in which the Secretary-General and a group of friends, including Mexico, participated.

From this rostrum I wish to pay tribute to the work of the Moderator, which was essential to the signing of six substantive agreements in the Guatemalan process. Now we are awaiting only the signing of a few operational agreements, which will lead to the early establishment of a lasting peace in that country.

With regard to the reform of the Security Council, Mexico considers it essential that in evaluating the proposals before us, account should be taken of the need for that organ's composition to reflect the increase in the membership of the Organization, while strictly respecting the wishes of the countries of each region and the principle of equitable geographical representation.

The United Nations must also strengthen its activities in the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, again on the basis of the contractual obligations entered into by each State, and in eliminating any vestiges of colonialism or of discrimination on grounds of sex, religion, race or political conviction.

One of the most urgent and complex issues of the reform process is that of revising the financing system and the criteria for establishing the contributions of Member States. But let us be frank: the financial crisis the United Nations is experiencing stems primarily from the lack of timely payment of assessed contributions by a considerable number of countries. This situation must be normalized as speedily as possible.

The maintenance of international peace and security continues to be the primary mission of the United Nations. Barely seven years ago, a sigh of relief marked the ending of the long night of the cold war. Hopes were reborn that, with peace strengthened, confidence in the United Nations would grow, the ambitions of dominance on the part of the economically and militarily powerful countries would cease, and a spirit of tolerance and harmony, of equity and mutual assistance — indispensable for the building of a better world — would soon develop. There was talk of "peace dividends". The reality has been more complex.

Mexico expresses its dismay at the violent incidents that have occurred recently in the Middle East and joins the appeal of the international community to all parties concerned to refrain from undertaking any actions that could worsen the situation and provoke further clashes. Such incidents constitute a dramatic reminder of the need for the parties to redouble their efforts with a view to advancing the peace process and ensuring that dialogue and reason prevail in the region.

Despite the magnitude of the obstacles that have to be overcome in order to ensure that human beings are educated for peace, Mexico maintains a profound faith in the United Nations, whose structures must be strengthened if we truly wish to give it the necessary capacity to discharge the complex and lofty tasks entrusted to it half a century ago, as well as those additional tasks it is charged with almost daily.

With renewed optimism, we trust that human beings still possess the resourcefulness and talent required to make this world a worthy and just abode for all.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Myanmar, Mr. Ohn Gyaw.

Mr. Gyaw (Myanmar): May I begin by extending to Mr. Razali the warmest congratulations of the delegation of the Union of Myanmar on his most deserving election as President of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. His election to that important office is no doubt a reflection of the high esteem in which his country, Malaysia, is held by the international community for its active role in world affairs, and of his wealth of personal experience and diplomatic skills. We are confident that under his leadership our deliberations will be fruitful. On a personal note, I should like to say how deeply honoured I was to have accompanied the Head of State Senior General Than Shwe on his state visit to Malaysia last month. The visit was a success. We were much impressed by the warm reception accorded us and by the outstanding achievements of the leadership in bringing peace and prosperity to the people of Malaysia.

I wish also to express our appreciation to Mr. Razali's predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, for his invaluable contribution to the work of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

The United Nations today is at a crossroads. On the one hand, there is hope for a new era in international relations as post- cold-war trends compel nations towards ever-growing interdependence and the globalization of the world economy. On the other hand, issues that have been dormant for decades have emerged, drawing the world into a pattern of conflict, ethnic strife and violence. In this time of global transformation the United Nations has an important role to play. It must actively work to guide the world through the transitional period to a new, peaceful, secure and stable era based on respect for the Charter.

In this United Nations Decade of International Law it would be most appropriate to rededicate ourselves to achieving a world in which principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence, sovereign equality and non-interference in the internal affairs of States are respected. Myanmar truly believes that we can overcome the political, economic and social challenges we face and avoid confrontation and chaos only if we seize the opportunity to extend and strengthen the Organization and promote a multilateral system based on the primacy of international law and freedom of choice and equality of all States.

Disarmament, sustainable development, enhancement of the environment and suppression of narcotic drugs are priority issues that affect the security and well-being of peoples throughout the world. Concern continues to mount over the lack of adequate progress in these areas. The proliferation of arms, particularly of weapons of mass destruction, remains the greatest potential threat to mankind's survival. All States, large and small, nuclear and non-nuclear, have a vital interest in ensuring the success of negotiations on disarmament. The primary responsibility for removing the threat of a nuclear holocaust, however, rests with the nuclear-weapon States. It is essential that the nuclear-weapon States show the political will to accommodate the concerns of non-nuclear-weapon States to achieve a mutually acceptable basis for universal disarmament.

Myanmar continues to regard a comprehensive test-ban treaty as an essential step towards nuclear disarmament. The adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) by the General Assembly on 10 September 1996 is a welcome development. It will contribute significantly to the process of nuclear disarmament and to our efforts to achieve the goal of general and complete disarmament.

Myanmar has always supported the establishment of nuclear-free zones. In our own region we have, together with our neighbours, signed and ratified the South East Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone Treaty. Peace and security in the world need to be built upon economic development. Without development there can be no lasting peace. It must be realized, however, that economic progress in developing countries depends as much on a fair and equitable international economic environment as it does on domestic reforms to effectively confront the challenge of poverty and economic malaise. In this regard, we share the Secretary-General's view that development should be recognized as the foremost and most far-reaching task of our time. At the same time, we are deeply concerned that the process of globalization of the world economy has yielded many more losers than winners. The situation was most eloquently described by the Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, President Samper Pizano of Colombia, in his address to the Meeting of the Ministerial Committee on Methodology held earlier this year in Cartagena:

> "The cake of progress continues to be handed out in large slices for a few, and in crumbs for the rest."

Indeed it is distressing to note the dangerous tendency of certain States to link trade and commerce with other issues. We find unacceptable the threat or use of economic sanctions and the extraterritorial application of domestic law to influence policies in developing countries. The use of economic sanctions as a tool of policy is indefensible. It is a flagrant breach of the United Nations Charter.

Narcotic drugs are a growing menace to the international community. Aware of the problem, Myanmar is carrying out narcotics suppression as a national cause. From the outset the Myanmar Government realized that the drug problem can be tackled only through a multisectoral approach and has laid down national strategies to combat the menace. The nationwide drug-abuse control programme covers many activities: crop substitution and livestock distribution for farmers in the border areas where opium is grown; treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts; preventive education; and law enforcement. The areas where poppies are grown are underdeveloped regions where the national races depend on the cultivation of opium as their principal means of livelihood. Hence, the Government has set up an entire ministry devoted to the development of border areas. The development of these areas will no doubt ensure the success of the eradication campaign.

In parallel with the national effort, the Government has sought closer cooperation with the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) and neighbouring countries, and is actively participating in the international campaign against the production and trafficking of illicit drugs. Our efforts are meeting with success, as one armed group after another has returned to the fold to join hands with the Government in development endeavours. An encouraging event this year was the unconditional surrender of the Mong Tai Army of nearly 20,000 men, led by U Khun Sa. We are confident that this unprecedented achievement will result in a drastic reduction of the opium supply.

I should like to firmly reiterate Myanmar's commitment to the total eradication of poppy plantations in our country. The sheer magnitude of the problem requires new ways and means to address the problem. There must be additional efforts to curb demand, just as we work to deter production and trafficking. We would welcome increased support for our national programmes or for development projects administered by UNDCP.

Environment issues are among the most widely discussed topics of our times. Environment and development top the international agenda as human impact on the environment has increased dramatically and mankind faces challenges unprecedented in scope and severity. The tremendous growth in population, coupled with industrial development in every region of the world, has taxed the carrying capacity of the Earth. The struggle even to support the present population at today's standards of living will cause environmental degradation on an unprecedented scale. However, in the last few years seeds of hope have been sown, as there is growing awareness in the world that the causes and consequences of environmental degradation transcend boundaries and that our future world must be one of partnership.

Myanmar is aware that different elements of ecological systems are linked. It is only through an integrated approach at the national, regional and global levels that we can achieve sustainable development. For this reason we have been endeavouring to contribute to the protection and promotion of the environment at every level.

In developing countries like Myanmar, forests, farmlands, fisheries and freshwater constitute the foundation of development. In Myanmar we are fortunate that these resources are abundant and are not under stress. This is largely the result of the traditional culture that pervades daily life. Planting trees, creating gardens and parks, building bridges, digging wells, and providing rest houses and monasteries are considered meritorious deeds. The people of Myanmar love and respect nature and seek to live in harmony with the environment. The history of Myanmar is replete with accounts of environmental conservation carried out by Myanmar monarchs. The ancient kings had the vision to protect teak forests by royal decree and to ensure systematic management of forest resources.

In the three years following the World Conference on Human Rights, increasing emphasis has been placed on the promotion and protection of human rights. While we can welcome the spirit in which the question of human rights is considered, we are seriously concerned by the growing tendency of certain Western countries to politicize the question of human rights and to use it as a tool to interfere in the domestic affairs of States. We firmly believe that the international community should take a more holistic approach to the question of human rights and not be preoccupied with individual rights and freedoms.

Any government, institution or individual seeking to promote human rights should bear in mind the significance of national and regional peculiarities as well as historical, cultural and religious backgrounds and the stage of economic development. In Myanmar and other developing countries, poverty remains an effective obstacle to the full enjoyment of those rights. For this reason we are redoubling our efforts to ensure our peoples' right to development so that they can be delivered from the clutches of poverty.

The allegations that wholesale repressive measures are being carried out in Myanmar have never been borne out. On the contrary, the peace and stability that now reign in the country have allowed it to achieve significant progress. Continued economic reform will positively affect the living standards of all citizens. At present there is potential in Myanmar for unprecedented peace and development and for it to join the ranks of the fast-growing economies in its region. The international community can do no better than to help Myanmar by playing a constructive role.

In recent years a few countries, such as Myanmar, have been singled out by certain countries for punitive action. Central to any assessment of the proper course of policy towards any country is an understanding of the conditions that prevail there. In the case of Myanmar, first and foremost, it should be noted that it is undergoing important reforms. Regrettably, no credit has been given to the Myanmar Government for bringing about political stability and economic progress in a short period of eight years.

The Government has initiated economic reforms aimed at transforming the centrally planned economy into a market-oriented one. Private investment and domestic entrepreneurial activity have been encouraged, and the economy has been opened to direct foreign investment. Private-sector participation in both domestic and foreign trade has been promoted. The economic reforms are bearing fruit and have led to sustained growth. In the past four years the economy recorded an average growth rate of 8.2 per cent, resulting in increased employment opportunities and significantly rising living standards in the country, primarily in urban areas, where private enterprises are flourishing, and in fertile rural areas, where farmers have better incentive to grow and market their produce.

Foreign investments in Myanmar today totals $4.3 billion and is expected to grow in the coming years. That the pace of economic activity has quickened is reflected not only within the country but abroad, where a growing number of Myanmar representatives are taking part in international and regional forums, including sports, business and intellectual meetings.

We in Myanmar are aware that the best hope for a brighter future lies in our national races joining together to ensure the stability of the State, community peace and tranquillity. To this end a national convention is being held to adopt guidelines for a new State constitution, in accordance with which a peaceful, modern and developed nation will be built.

It should be appreciated that Myanmar is a union composed of 135 national races from which 16 armed groups have evolved, some dating back to 1948, the year of our independence. It should also be noted that, despite the magnitude of the task, the Myanmar Government has succeeded in bringing back to the fold 15 out of the 16 armed groups and has established a separate Ministry for Progress of Border Areas and National Races and Development Affairs. Insurgency, which hindered development for decades, is now virtually over, and all the energy of the defence forces and the people is being devoted to nation-building. One fact that is often overlooked is the pervasive influence of traditional culture in Myanmar, as a result of which leniency has been shown to offenders. Although a number of death sentences were handed down by civil and military courts following the 1988 unrest in the country, none has been carried out.

One factor that demonstrates our confidence in the positive changes taking place in Myanmar is our readiness to open our doors to tourists. This year has been designated "Visit Myanmar Year", and we are expecting hundreds of thousands of visitors despite the negative campaign launched by critics. Those who call for a travel boycott to Myanmar should remember that tourism benefits a wide range of people, the visitors as well as the hosts. Big hotels and travel agencies, as well as the family-run stalls that sell everything from hand-crafted jewellery to lacquer-ware and wood carvings, stand to make a living. Why not encourage tourists to come to Myanmar and see for themselves the vast transformations taking place?

Today, as we stand on the threshold of a new millennium, we have before us both opportunities and challenges. At this time of important change and transformation, the United Nations and its Member States must strive to ensure that all nations can live in peace and harmony. To this end, we will need a man of exceptional skills and wisdom at the helm of the Organization in the years ahead. We should continue to seek the best man for the job, bearing in mind the personal skills and integrity that the important post demands. The choice of the Secretary-General of the Organization assumes an even greater importance at this time, when we see increasing resort to the threat or use of force in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and principles of the Organization.

In conclusion, I should like to renew Myanmar's pledge to work with all nations to strengthen the Organization and to achieve universal peace.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of El Salvador, His Excellency Mr. Ramón Ernesto González Giner.

Mr. González Giner (El Salvador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like to extend to the President and to all the delegations of Member States the cordial greetings of the people and Government of El Salvador. I should also like to congratulate the President on his election to preside over this session and to express thanks to Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral for the dedication with which he carried out his mandate. At this session, we must adopt very important decisions designed to strengthen the Organization. We are convinced that the President's pragmatism and experience will help our debate to take a proper course, overcome obstacles and give impetus to the reforms called for by Member States.

In October 1995 we celebrated the golden anniversary of the United Nations, an occasion that afforded us an opportunity to assess the work of the Organization, to recognize the importance of this institution in deepening understanding among nations and to ensure that its purposes and principles remain fully in effect. At that time, world leaders agreed to support the implementation of the reform needed to ensure that the international community would indeed have an effective Organization able to meet the requirements presented by a constantly changing world.

In the light of that commitment, we believe that at this session debate should avoid unnecessary confrontation and be focused on the formulation of practical recommendations to ensure that the joint efforts of Member States will be in accordance with the Declaration adopted at the fiftieth anniversary. In so doing, important decisions can be taken that will give the

Organization the capabilities and resources to meet the challenges of the new millennium effectively.

The dynamics of the international system in recent years lead us to an even greater appreciation of the various initiatives that have been discussed with regard to the common problems that affect us all. In solving them, we must act together and share the successful experiences of each individual State in order to improve the standard of living of all our peoples.

We commend the successful convening of summits, at which programmes of action on global problems relating to women, children, human rights, the environment, social development, population and human settlements have been adopted. These conferences are a clear demonstration of the political will and the moral commitment of the international community to redefine the paradigms for sustainable development by means of rekindled creativity focused on the individual as well as the family.

The complexity and interdependency of our problems oblige each and every Member State to redouble their efforts to participate more actively in finding solutions. Such solutions must emerge from a new vision of the current international situation, characterized by increasingly globalized economies and requiring greater efficiency and competitiveness in the productive sectors in order successfully to confront higher levels of competition.

Despite the positive elements of this picture, we must not confound joint efforts with the principal responsibility that each and every government bears in solving the problems affecting its own society.

In the global political situation, we note with satisfaction that progress has been made in participatory democracy throughout the world. This is one of the most important phenomena at the end of this century, as it enables individuals to participate directly and creatively in solving their own problems.

We are convinced that United Nations efforts to resolve and contain conflicts by means of peacekeeping operations are beneficial to the achievement of world harmony. In addition to having benefited from this process, El Salvador has been an active party to it.

Our country's experience in effectively settling its recent armed conflict can help other countries dealing with similar situations. This makes it possible for us to share our knowledge and experience with the international community, to contribute to solving such conflicts by means of dialogue and common work, leading to the consolidation of peace, democracy and respect for human rights.

We have said that there has been a sea change in the international system, but conflicts and problems remain. At this time, we wish to encourage their resolution in an atmosphere of cooperation, dialogue and negotiation by means of frank and objective discussion.

In recent years, 25 new States have exercised their sovereign right to self-determination and become Members of the United Nations, thereby reaffirming the Organization's principle of universality. Unfortunately this principle has not been fully respected and will not be fully respected until all States, including the Republic of China in Taiwan, are represented in the United Nations.

The creation of jobs, the rule of law, the security of citizens, access to proper housing, health, education, medical care and nutrition for children, and a clean and life-sustaining environment are all requirements that deserve priority. If at the United Nations we can formulate policies and carry out innovative, effective activities in this connection, people throughout the world, particularly the most dispossessed, can benefit from this important step forward in solving their problems. This is the only way the Organization can truly make a creative and effective contribution to ensuring that democracy is perceived as a positive process for humankind.

The financial problems of our Organization are an obstacle to the proper functioning of its programmes and activities, especially those in less developed countries. The needs of development require that the United Nations function more transparently, effectively and, above all, efficiently. For this, our beliefs and our actions must be consistent.

The new vision that is emerging in the international system can be explained by the domestic transformations taking place in many countries throughout the world. Central America is a part of this process. Allow me to describe the current experiences of our region. A few years before the start of the new millennium, the Central American countries have left behind our sad history of confrontation and have embarked upon the path to peace, freedom, democracy and development, as shaped by the Central American Presidents in our Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Central America. This Alliance comprises policies, programmes and activities that provide a new system for integral development and are creating progressive change in living standards by ensuring economic growth with social equity, and development that is in harmony with nature, thus ensuring that future generations will have a high quality of life.

The Central American Presidents also adopted a series of commitments to work together to meet the objectives of the Alliance for Sustainable Development. In political terms, these include strengthening and consolidating the rule of law and democratic security as well as modernizing the public sector; in economic terms, improving economic integration, harmonizing macroeconomic policies and modernizing regional infrastructures; in the social sphere, systematically reducing poverty, emphasizing job-creation and investment in human capital, giving priority to eduction, health and training; in the cultural area, ensuring the preservation of the values and traditions of the cultural heritage of the Central American peoples; and in environmental terms, preserving and protecting the biodiversity of the region, promoting reforestation and the appropriate utilization of water catchment areas, biological corridors and protected areas.

In El Salvador, barely four years after the signature of the peace accords, we are pleased to note that we have come close to full implementation of the commitments entered into at the time and are moving strongly towards establishing democratic institutions and national reconstruction. Our peace process has been held up as an example, and we are pleased to serve as a model and an encouragement to ensure that situations similar to ours can be solved in other areas of the world. After having solved a prolonged domestic conflict by political means, we Salvadorans have many challenges before us which can be summed up in a few words: the achievement of a lasting, stable and modern democracy based on the rule of law that will enable us to achieve social peace and the building of a new El Salvador.

For these reasons, we are determined to expedite actions aimed at satisfying the deepest aspirations of our people: worthwhile and well-paid work; a participatory education stressing the creation of a culture of peace based on civic and moral values; a health system that is not only curative but preventive; the promotion of micro-enterprises and small businesses; full respect for and promotion of human rights, including special emphasis on the rights of women and children; the restoration and preservation of our environment; strengthening the rule of law; and the consolidation of a true system of civil liberties. On this basis, the Salvadoran people will be able to put all of their talents and efforts into achieving the sustainable and integral development of society.

We believe that human and economic development are two sides of the same coin, and mutually dependent. Greater human development makes possible conditions under which economic development can increase, which in turn produces increased resources to stimulate human development.

Accordingly, the Government of President Armando Calderón Sol is carrying out reforms that will allow for the creation of a country replete with opportunities for all Salvadorans, thereby breaking the vicious circle of poverty in which those born poor are condemned to die poor.

This objective can be achieved as long as we, as a nation, have a single vision that goes beyond different ideological or political circumstances. The great task facing this generation in El Salvador is to recognize that society is a whole and to ensure that all the force of history is brought to bear in order to find solutions that benefit the entire population.

The people and Government of El Salvador wish to reaffirm their recognition of the contribution made by the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, his representatives and the agencies of the United Nations system, to the consolidation of peace, democracy and reconstruction in our country. We would like also to thank the international community for its material, technical and financial support to complement the efforts of the Salvadoran people to achieve peace and sustainable development, which has enabled us to begin a process of modernization, so as to meet successfully the challenges of the twenty-first century.

In conclusion, we would like to express our absolute confidence that, at the conclusion of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, the peoples of the world who are represented here will have reached a greater level of understanding, trust and cooperation, enabling them to deal together with the problems affecting the international community.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on the permanent representative of Belize, Mr. Edward A. Laing.

Mr. Laing (Belize): In this fifty-first year of the United Nations, we are particularly happy to see

Mr. Razali Ismail presiding over this Assembly. This is in no small measure due to his well-deserved high reputation. In large measure, too, our joy comes from my Government's appreciation of the deep commitment of his Government to national and international economic improvement with equity. We are grateful, too, for the excellent services rendered by his predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, in a year in which, under his guidance, reform of the United Nations system truly gathered momentum.

Today it is often remarked that there are many signs of the diminishing role of national sovereignty. In the sphere of human rights, the regional adjudicatory systems continue to flourish. Scrutiny is increasingly given by the regional bodies and by such other groupings as the Commonwealth of nations. We have good reason to believe that the new commonwealth of Portuguese-speaking nations will soon travel along the same path. At the United Nations, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Commission on Human Rights and the human rights treaty bodies all continue to scrutinize States for their rectitude in the field of human rights. It certainly seems that the High Commissioner for Human Rights, together with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other executive agencies, are performing a useful watchdog and catalytic function.

While this Organization's efforts at humanitarian intervention have not been overwhelmingly successful, they have certainly provided evidence of the probable reality that absolutist notions of State sovereignty are in decline. Thus, we witness the acknowledgement, by States, of shared interests which contribute to enhanced cooperation in joint efforts to combat the trafficking of narcotics and to preserve and regenerate the environment. Recently, too, the Organization of American States launched an initiative that points in the same direction: the inter-American convention against corruption.

Corruption has been a scourge throughout our region, as it is elsewhere. In our region, therefore, we have determined drastically to reduce its impact, even if that might have implications for State sovereignty. In the same way, the flurry of conventions and new organizations on the global environment, and the outpourings of the recent global conferences and summits on social and other issues bear witness to the rapid erosion of absolutist notions of sovereignty.

During the past year efforts have been to bring into being the long-awaited International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. Despite certain regrettable limitations, the Appellate Body of the World Trade Organization, the new tribunal for international trade disputes, has now issued its first judgment. We have also settled down to serious work in preparing for an international criminal court, just as the Tribunals for the prosecution of war crimes in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda are getting under way. These all constitute a significant development in the international system, in which the State and its citizens are increasingly made subject to international scrutiny.

We must insist, however, that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. We therefore expect that large States, as well as small States, will fully submit themselves to these new Tribunals. We also fully expect that powerful States will refrain from exerting their sovereign wills over smaller or weaker States.

On a different subject, we have also witnessed a certain contraction of the public sector both within nations and international organizations. The attrition of the national budgets of capital-exporting and donor countries has had a domino effect on international organizations and capital-importing and recipient countries. So-called reductions in force and other forms of structural adjustment have therefore become a painful way of life. In this respect, this Organization and my country and many others have not been spared. At the same time, my country and many others have now established modern and rational systems for the imposition and collection of indirect taxes and other revenues. I refer especially to the value-added tax, the use of which is now virtually universal.

Like most Governments, mine has had to trim several vital services. Everywhere, Governments are obliged to experiment with the privatization of many former State functions and have liquidated large chunks of State property. Even as these changes occur within many economies and Governmental structures, other actors have stepped onto the national and international stage. These actors, of course, include civil society and the non-governmental organizations, which now participate in almost every aspect of life.

At the same time, we are trying to understand and cope with the novel phenomenon of globalization. Globalization has several positive aspects, especially liberalization, which it presupposes. However, globalization also seems to presuppose the universalization of mammoth private-sector enterprises and associations. This universalization is accompanied by revision or, in places, the reversal of aspects of such legal and economic doctrines as those that disapproved of excessive industrial combinations and monopolies.

Nevertheless, globalization is a logical accompaniment to the reduction of the scope of sovereignty. But just as a loss of national autonomy is not an unalloyed blessing, this newfangled gigantism is too massive to be swallowed whole. For one thing, globalization as we are witnessing it today is an unprecedented phenomenon, even for the former empires. Whatever its advocates may say, it sometimes seems to contradict our very humanity, since the micro-dimension should never be neglected in the face of the macro-dimension. Both dimensions are essentially complementary. Globalization, furthermore, sometimes denies the tenets of, and the recent directions in, individual and collective human rights. This is because, when it is taken to its logical extreme, as it is in several places, it seems to lead to an international euthanasia. It contributes to a "dinner-table scraps" mentality, or a "crabs-in-the-basket" attitude, whereby the disadvantaged might starve to death or destroy others in order to survive, while those who are more advantaged are enabled to gorge even more.

Furthermore, certain forms of assertive globalization also fly in the face of diversity. They are anathema to cultural, social and economic pluralism, whose validity is uncontrovertible in socio-biological terms. As globalization is increasingly manifested in the electronic and communications media, these problems loom very large as, throughout the world, we see our youth taking on the mind-sets and the habiliments of corrupt, alien trend-setters who are mainly interested in purveying unnecessary products and creating false desires. As well we know, the consequences are often mindless violence and sexual and other exploitation of women, children and the weak. Surely this Organization must seek to ensure that these consequences are eradicated.

Globalization and the decline of State sovereignty evidence the dramatic changes sweeping the globe, a subject on which many of us often comment from this rostrum. Change is indeed the order of the day, and change, in these specific respects, is actually part and parcel of this Organization and its Charter. After all, despite the fact that some would spin theories to the contrary, the very conception of the United Nations Charter was an enthronement of the doctrine of reduced sovereignty. Only by reducing sovereignty could the excesses that were evident before and during the Second World War be curtailed. Clearly, the very conception of the United Nations presupposes a type of essential globalization.

It is therefore surprising how, in some quarters, globalization by private economic actors pursuing or motivated by the dictates of acquisitiveness, cupidity or what is referred to as "efficiency" can be applauded, while similar but much more modest behaviour by groups of sovereigns is now decried. We urge that one crucial key to meaningful reform of the United Nations must surely be enthronement of this Organization's globalism. We must, indeed, enhance efficiency by rationalizing the managerial structure of the United Nations and the ways in which we select its executives, as was intelligently suggested in the latest edition of the important study by Urquhart and Childers, entitled *A World In Need of Leadership*.

We must act globally by harnessing in common the shared resources of the planet. We repeat our call from previous general debates that this Organization, in keeping with its global function, must be given autonomous revenue authority in certain areas not presently in the domain of nation States. We must acknowledge the utility of the concept of a modest, truly representative and revocable trusteeship over certain ocean and aerial spaces.

We may also wish to acknowledge the fact that the nuclear Powers are merely revocable trustees over nuclear weapons, even as we move towards ending all forms of nuclear testing and comply with the recent Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice requiring the prompt negotiation, in good faith, of nuclear disarmament. At the same time, we must eradicate everywhere the bitter arsenals of mines and other injurious weapons and noxious substances, and ensure that substances such as nuclear waste do not pass through our territorial or other waters.

Responsible globalism will reap for the world the fruits of the promises made in connection with this Organization's wartime antecedents: that economic, social and all other forms of development are the absolute heritage of under-possessed and dispossessed individuals, peoples and nations. We are under a strict obligation to keep this Organization's Agenda for Development on the front burner. Belize has proposed that we should establish an annual special session of this Assembly immediately prior to the general debate, at which we would discuss development policy and regenerate the political will necessary continually to revise the complex Agenda for

Development and the commitments made in this Assembly, as well as at the high-level global conferences of this last decade of the twentieth century. At that annual session, we could also effectively discuss certain specific portions of the Second Committee items currently discussed during the regular session.

Enlightened globalism will compel us, with alacrity and dignity, to make good the humanitarian obligations of this "one world" to the least-developed countries, to Africa, to small developing islands and low-lying developing coastal areas like Belize, to land-locked countries and to other disadvantaged places. We should be happy to do so without repeating any of the recent tired, uncharitable and inaccurate nostrums about the death of the obligation to accord economic preferences to poor countries, even as we clamour that human rights and humanitarianism have now been elevated to a place of honour in the international pantheon.

Even as we extol the virtues of United Nations globalism, we can discern another antidote or counterpart to the gigantism of private-sector globalization. This is the phenomenon of regionalism.

Regionalism is the concept that drives many current proposals — including those of Belize — for reform of the United Nations Security Council and is a suggested basis for the selection of additional so-called permanent members — privileged, although not serving indefinitely. Incidentally, such a selection could be done entirely within the region or, as is done in many cases at present, by the Assembly.

Regionalism is the essence of Belize's proposals for shared seats on the Security Council, whereby adjacent or proximate States can pool their resources to serve the international community in that rather expensive enterprise. We gratefully acknowledge the fact that Belize's proposals have attracted some attention.

Even as portions of Central Africa appear to teeter on the brink, regionalism has been relatively effective and remains the main hope for preserving peace and security in several parts of this troubled world. It acknowledges the reality that the Organization is not structured to carry out peacemaking and peacekeeping undertakings on a sustained basis.

My delegation also believes that regionalism can become a critical element in the quest successfully to confront the menace of narcotics without leading to unwitting hegemonism.

We now see an abundance of formal arrangements for subregional integration. These are occurring throughout the five regions of the United Nations. Informal arrangements also abound. These lead us to urge nations in all parts of the world, as well as the global body politic, to explore functional cooperation on a regional and subregional basis, as we now try to do within the Association of Caribbean States and as we have done for centuries in several sub-areas of the Caribbean. We are now witnessing much fruitful regional liberalization and the integration of labour markets, competition policy, labour standards, monetary systems, investments, technical cooperation and trade.

We are happy to witness such functional regionalism in Africa, Asia, Europe and other parts of Latin America. We are also witnessing a reordering of the globe as new regions are identified and new relationships developed between regions. Thus, instead of imagining that the Pacific islands are worlds apart from the Caribbean and Central America, as we did when we looked eastward at them, we now see them as neighbouring fellow citizens of the tropics as we look westward at them over our fragile isthmus of Central America.

From this geopolitical vantage point as well, we see East Asia as a partner to the Caribbean and Central America. This helps us appreciate that the contemporary approach to statehood fully justifies the aspirations of a democratic Asian country that is one of the most substantial players in the global economy for a greater measure of political participation in the system of international organizations. That country is Taiwan. In the view of my delegation, such participation would be quite consistent with prevailing notions of sovereignty. At the same time, it is assumed that the territorial integrity of the People's Republic of China would be completely unimpaired. We believe that the statehood and dignity of the latter ancient, honourable and global Power should and would be safeguarded in any situation we have posited. Without meaning to interfere, we would hope that, in this connection, as has been stated in other contexts in these remarks, *noblesse oblige*.

Turning to another region, we must reiterate our concern about the recent retardation of the peace process between Israel and its neighbours. Again, we call for improvement of conditions in southern Lebanon and elsewhere and for the genuine autonomy that is the birthright of the Palestinians.

Finally, we wish to suggest that regionalism, including functional cooperation, will contribute significantly to the fulfilment of the millennial dreams of the architects of this great global Organization.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

A number of representatives have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that, in accordance with decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply shall be limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I wish to make a statement in right of reply to the so-called Foreign Minister of colonial South Korea.

The statement of Mr. Ro-Myung Gong is so childish that it cannot be compared with the statements of the Foreign Ministers of other sovereign States delivered in the General Assembly. His statement is from beginning to end intended as part of an anti-North campaign to incite North-South confrontation, even in this international arena. The very appearance of Mr. Ro-Myung Gong, one of the running dogs of colonial South Korea, degrades the dignity of the United Nations.

I am now going to refute point by point the argument he aimed at us. The South Korean authorities have no qualification to talk about the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula. They are traitors to the nation who have introduced United States nuclear weapons into the living space of our nation to bring nuclear holocaust down upon it. In fact, colonial South Korea has no say with regard to the nuclear weapons of the United States that are deployed on its own territory. It is ridiculous that the South Korean authorities should take issue with us about nuclear problems. The nuclear issue can be resolved only by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States, not by the South Korean puppets.

We were the victims of chemical-weapon attacks by the United States and the South Korean puppets in the Korean War. The South Korean authorities are taking issue with us over chemical weapons to lay a smokescreen over their criminal preparations for biochemical warfare.

As for the four-party talks, I would advise the authorities of the colony of South Korea, who have no sovereignty, no power and no ability with regard to such talks, to remain mum rather than make unreasonable statements.

Lastly, I shall give a rather detailed explanation to facilitate the understanding of delegations present in this Hall. As has been reported, a sub-unit of the Korean People's Army was on a routine training course aboard a small training submarine in the waters of the North side of the East Sea of Korea on 18 September. Engine trouble compelled it to drift southward and run aground in the waters of the South off Kangrung. In this connection, the spokesman for the Ministry of the People's Armed Forces of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in a statement dated 23 September 1996, officially confirmed that a small training submarine of the Korean People's Army was stranded in the waters of the South and demanded that the submarine, the survivors and the dead soldiers be returned unconditionally and immediately. This expresses the good will of the North side and its wish that the accident not develop into tension or misfortune, which does not help peace and the peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula.

The South Korean authorities, however, did not reciprocate our good will to solve the problem peacefully, but answered it with ever more vicious slander of and challenges to the North, and they continue to use the accident for a sinister political purpose. From the beginning, they adopted a provocative attitude that is very dangerous. Although they directly confirm that this submarine of the North side was stranded off Kangrung while drifting, after experiencing engine trouble on 18 September, they branded it an armed spy boat and started a provocative campaign. Although the submarine crew could not but go ashore because the boat was stranded, they branded them intruding spies and mobilized a joint army-police search team to kill them.

To people's consternation, the soldiers of the North side were branded by the South Korean authorities as armed spies and armed Communist bandits, and they became the target of military attack by the South Korean army-police search team. In the course of this incident, nearly 20 soldiers of the North side were killed in cold blood. There were no grounds or conditions for them to become the target of gunfire. They had no arms or equipment for intrusion or destruction. Moreover, those killed were crewmen, including the Captain, the Chief

Engineer and the Navigator, as was reported by South Korean radio. What could they do on land after abandoning the boat?

The South Korean authorities are aggravating tensions by using the accident, which could have been settled peacefully, for the purpose of inter-Korean confrontation. Our position on peace and war is already well known: we want peace, but we are fully prepared to punish those who disturb the peace. As the flame was kindled in South Korea, we cannot remain a victim for an indefinite period.

It is self-evident that we, the victims, cannot show self-restraint any longer, as the offenders behave more arrogantly. As victims, we have the right to retaliate against the offenders. Our retaliation may be 100-fold or 1,000-fold. No matter what kind of retaliation we take, the South Korean puppets will be wholly to blame. Fire should be answered with fire. The bellicose South Korean elements are approaching the danger line with their reckless firing. The South Korean authorities must immediately stop their ill-intended campaign against our wrecked submarine and return it and the surviving and dead crewmen immediately and unconditionally. Time is not unlimited.

Mr. Ibrahim (Indonesia): My delegation would like to exercise its right of reply with regard to the statement made earlier today by His Excellency the Foreign Minister of Portugal, in which he referred to the question of East Timor. It is regrettable that once again Portugal deems it fit to mislead the international community in relation to the relevant facts concerning the decolonization process in East Timor and the human rights situation in the province.

Suffice it to say that the people of East Timor have already exercised their right to self-determination, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions 1540 (XV), 1541 (XV), and 2625 (XXV). This entire process culminated in the formal promulgation into law of the statute of integration on 17 July 1976. It is therefore the view of my delegation that the question of East Timor has long ceased to be an issue, since it has been settled in full respect of the right of the people and in full accordance with the United Nations resolutions.

However, as a reflection of its abiding respect for the United Nations, Indonesia is committed to cooperating with the Secretary-General in its efforts to find a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution to the question of East Timor. Contrary to Portugal's unwarranted allegations of "systematic abuses of human rights", the past 20 years of East Timor's integration with Indonesia have reflected development in the province that guarantee that the promotion and protection of human rights, including the right to food, education, health, shelter, religious freedom, the right to vote and the right of assembly, which had been neglected in over four centuries of Portuguese colonial rule of this territory.

As regards the progress in dialogue, the progress report of the Secretary-General on the question of East Timor, contained in document A/51/361 of 16 September 1996, has drawn our attention to the possibility that despite the difficult nature of the task, a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution to the question of East Timor may be within reach. The report, however, suggests that the cooperation and flexibility of the concerned parties will be required to ensure further progress.

Indonesia, for its part, has from the outset demonstrated its sincerity, realism and flexibility during the dialogue. In this context, it should be recalled that in 1986 an overall settlement was almost reached between Indonesia and Portugal, but the Government of Portugal unilaterally withdrew its consent. Furthermore, in 1991, following long and arduous negotiations, both sides agreed to the visit of a Portuguese parliamentary delegation to Indonesia, including East Timor. But time and again, for some groundless reasons, Portugal failed to honour its commitments. Consequently, the progress of the tripartite dialogue slowed down.

In conclusion, Indonesia would like to reiterate its readiness to fully cooperate with the Secretary-General's efforts to find a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution to the question of East Timor.

Mr. Gomersall (United Kingdom): My delegation would like to respond very briefly to certain remarks made by the Foreign Minister of Spain this afternoon concerning Gibraltar.

My delegation has no wish to engage in open polemic with a friendly ally and partner on an issue which can be resolved only by direct talks, such as have already been agreed between our Governments, in the Brussels Declaration of 1984, to which the Foreign Minister referred. In view of what was said, however, it may be necessary to restate the position of my Government, although it is well known to the Government of Spain.

British sovereignty over Gibraltar was clearly established in the Treaty of Utrecht. This legal fact is inconvertible. Furthermore, Britain stands by its commitment to the people of Gibraltar in the preamble to the 1969 Constitution. Her Majesty's Government will not enter into any arrangements under which the people of Gibraltar would pass under the sovereignty of another State against their freely and democratically expressed wishes.

We do not consider that the notion of territorial integrity is at all relevant in this case. I am sure that our Spanish colleague, who exercised his own right of reply last Monday night, understands this position.

There are many issues left over from history which are better resolved by cooperation than by assertions of sovereignty. Nonetheless, we recognize that Spain is Gibraltar's immediate neighbour and we attach importance to continuing dialogue with Spain as a means of overcoming our existing differences.

It is in that framework that my Government and the Government of Gibraltar have been engaged with the Government of Spain in talks to improve cooperation on issues such as drug smuggling in the area and to enable the communities on both sides of the frontier to benefit from free economic relations within the framework of the European communities.

Mr. Chun (Republic of Korea): I have asked to speak in response to North Korea's exercise of the right of reply.

North Korea has made a number of allegations with regard to my country, including personal attacks on my Foreign Minister. I will dwell only on the submarine incident that the North Korean representative referred to at great length.

North Korea claims that this submarine, which was found grounded on the east coast of the Republic of Korea last week, drifted south due to engine trouble while on a routine training mission. This is an absurd fabrication and an outright insult to human intelligence. We are also appalled at North Korea's brazen lack of sincerity and remorse over the incident.

Let me outline a few simple facts which belie the truthfulness of North Korea's claim. To start with, North Korea made this claim five days after the submarine was discovered and only after the loss of 23 lives, including three of our own. These lives could have been saved simply by informing us of the nature of the incident and asking for assistance if it were indeed true that engine trouble caused the submarine to drift into our waters.

A hotline linking Seoul and Pyongyang is actually available for such contingencies. There was a recent instance in which the Republic of Korea Navy rescued and returned a North Korean soldier who had drifted into the Yellow Sea due to flooding. If what North Korea claims is true, there is no reason for it to have taken so long to notify us, given that the lives of 26 officers of its own armed forces were at stake. The findings of the investigation into this incident, and other compelling evidence, also prove that their claim is false.

First, the current of the East Sea would have steered a drifting vessel in a northerly direction, while the North Korean submarine moved southwards, against the current, nearly 60 miles south of the demilitarized zone before running aground at our coast near Kangnung.

Secondly, the submarine never resorted to the well-established procedure of sending out distress signals when it allegedly encountered engine trouble.

Thirdly, the North Korean commandos who disembarked from the submarine and took hostile actions against our armed forces were disguised in Republic of Korea army combat fatigues and were even carrying South Korean weapons. We wonder why they had to wear our army uniforms while on a routine training mission.

Fourthly, there is clear evidence that the submarine's engine had been in perfect functioning condition until the vessel arrived on shore. The broken pieces of the screw blades and rudder of the submarine, as well as the damaged rocks beneath them, indicate that it tried in vain to motor itself out of the rockbed in which it had become lodged.

These objective facts and compelling evidence leave no doubt as to the nature of North Korea's military provocation. The incursion of 26 officers of the North Korean regular armed forces into the South by means of submarine is nothing less than a deliberate act of military provocation, which constitutes a clear and flagrant violation of the Korean Armistice Agreement. As such, it poses a serious threat to peace and security on the Korean peninsula. It is all the more regrettable that North Korea is using fabrications to justify what is unjustifiable.

We would remind the North Korean authorities that they alone are responsible for the consequences of this act of military provocation.

Mr. Catarino (Portugal): In reply to the exercise of the right of reply by the representative of Indonesia, I want to reiterate that, according to United Nations General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, East Timor is considered a Non-Self-Governing Territory. As far as East Timor is concerned, the decolonization process has not yet been completed.

Portugal has no claim — I repeat; no claim — regarding the territory of East Timor. But it has the duty of responsibility, based on historical, moral and juridical grounds, to ensure that the legitimate rights of the East Timorese people are recognized, in accordance with international law and the United Nations Charter.

That is why we are committed to a constructive dialogue with Indonesia under the auspices of the Secretary-General. We support this dialogue and I would once again like to express our hope that we will be able to achieve some progress in concrete terms towards a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable settlement.

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): We cannot show any respect to Mr. Ro-Myung Gong, the so-called Foreign Minister of South Korea, as he is one of the organizers of the killing of our people in South Korea. The world is witnessing once again the beastliness and savageness of the South Korean authorities. The South Korean authorities, having killed the conspirators, can fabricate whatever they like as long as our submarine and personnel are kept on their side.

In South Korea, the people say that the South Korean authorities can do anything they like except transform a man into a woman and a woman into a man.

Once again, I warn the South Korean authorities that, as victims, we have the right to retaliate against the offenders. Our retaliation may be 100-fold or 1,000-fold. No matter what form the retaliation will take, the South Korean puppets will be wholly to blame.

Mr. Ibrahim (Indonesia): In response to the statement just made by the delegation of Portugal, I merely wish to remind the Assembly that Portugal irresponsibly abandoned East Timor after the chaos instigated by Portugal itself. My delegation is of the view that today's statement was merely a repetition of those made previously, and does not warrant any further response, since our position on the matter is well known.

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Republic of Korea): I have nothing to add to what my delegation has already said in response to the rather amusing allegations made by the North Korean representative. I only remind the delegation of North Korea that the North Korean authorities cannot run away from their responsibilities with false allegations. The facts speak for themselves.

Mr. Catarino (Portugal): Again I would like to stress that the contents of the Indonesian statements cannot hide the essential facts and the prevailing situation in East Timor. Nor can a period of more than 20 years suppress or erase the aspirations and rights of more than 700,000 East Timorese. We sincerely hope that Indonesia, like other countries since the end of the cold war, will understand the new trends in the world.

For our part, we stand ready, as I have already stated, to seek a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable settlement. We will continue to work in good faith and patiently towards that goal in the framework of the talks under the auspices of the Secretary-General.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.

United Nations A/51/PV.14

General Assembly

Fifty-first Session

14th plenary meeting
Monday, 30 September 1996, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Razali Ismail . . . . (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President: The first speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Bolivia, His Excellency Mr. Antonio Aranibar Quiroga, on whom I now call.

Mr. Aranibar Quiroga (Bolivia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me to convey the congratulations of the Government and the people of Bolivia, President Razali Ismail, on your unanimous election, which is a token of the admiration and esteem in which the peoples of the world hold Malaysia and constitutes just recognition of your merits.

My delegation is grateful to the President of the Assembly at its previous session, Ambassador Diogo Freitas do Amaral, for the remarkable job he did. For the delegation of Bolivia, it was a distinct honour to serve as Vice-President of the Assembly under his able guidance.

I wish also to congratulate Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and extend to him our most sincere appreciation for his valuable contributions to international peace and cooperation, as well as for his insightful and untiring dedication to the cause of the United Nations.

Allow me first to refer to some aspects of the far-reaching structural reform in my country.

Domestically, since 1993, the Administration of President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada has been simultaneouslv transforming the State and the system of social participation, while also adapting the productive base of society to enable Bolivia to dynamically meet the demands inherent to the changes in contemporary international life.

The Government of Bolivia's current efforts are essentially based on the consolidation of participatory democratic institutions and on the conviction that economic development must be compatible with care for nature and the environment — in other words, that this must take place within the framework of sustainable development and of respect for ethnic and cultural diversity, in order to make unity in diversity possible.

My Government's national plan confers the highest priority on the struggle against poverty. It strives vigorously to increase work opportunities and seeks a better quality of life for all Bolivians, aiming to enter the twenty-first century with a modern, decentralized, participatory State. This perspective guides our policies of grass-roots participation, educational reform, and capitalization of major public enterprises.

Part and parcel of this landscape of change are our initiatives in support of children, women and the elderly. We are working hard to reduce infant and maternal mortality, to improve levels of nutrition and to provide assistance to those who most urgently need it. These tasks are an essential aspect of our effort to improve the lot of poor families.

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

My country is proud of its pluri-cultural and multi-ethnic character, and it is therefore taking important initiatives for the advancement of indigenous peoples. The Vice-President of the Republic, Victor Hugo Cárdenas, is a distinguished representative of Bolivia's Aymará people.

In the international arena, we are actively pursuing peaceful coexistence among States and trying to make international justice a reality.

Our position is based on the principles of equal rights of States, non-intervention in internal affairs, non-recognition of territorial acquisitions by force, respect for human rights and the other fundamental principles of international law.

The support we give to intergovernmental organizations, particularly the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS), reflects our confidence in the potential of multilateral cooperation in a world that is growing ever more complex and interdependent.

At the regional level, we are seeking the economic integration of Latin America and the Caribbean with the aim of establishing optimal conditions for forging a hemispheric community and establishing a united presence as the world opens up and markets expand.

We are seeking the closest possible ties with countries that share our subregional realities, and we are committed to merging the various integration processes. That policy has prompted Bolivia to sign an agreement forming a free-trade area with the members of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) — Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay — to sign agreements aimed at updating and reinvigorating the Andean Common Market, made up of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela, and to give effect to numerous bilateral treaties to enhance mutual complementarity on the basis of our experiences and the need to foster material and spiritual exchanges between nations.

The physical integration of the countries of the region constitutes another central issue deserving priority attention. We are working actively on the definition of inter-oceanic corridors, and we attach great importance to the future of the Plata Basin and the Treaty for Amazonian Cooperation.

With regard to Bolivia's maritime question, I must inform the international community, as we have done every year, that Bolivia has reiterated in various forums its political willingness to begin negotiations that take proper account of the interests of all the parties involved and ensure Bolivia's sovereign presence with regard to the Pacific Ocean.

No clear willingness to engage in dialogue can yet be seen. However, on the basis of contacts on this matter we can say that, despite historical difficulties and ultranationalist suspicions, minds are opening and objective foundations are being laid with a view to encouraging a timely solution to old problems through the exchange of ideas, the nurturing of mutual trust, mutual interest and hemispheric understanding, in the hope that, before long, brotherhood, equality, justice and the requirements of international peace and cooperation will truly prevail.

This year Bolivia had the honour to act as pro tempore secretariat of the Rio Group, a high-level forum of consultation and political coordination for an important group of Latin American and Caribbean States. In that capacity, Bolivia was the venue of the sixth regular meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Rio Group and the European Union, held last April in the city of Cochabamba. On that occasion we reaffirmed our readiness for joint endeavours between Latin America, the Caribbean and Western Europe. The meeting strengthened ties between the two regions, based on respect for human rights, the fundamental rights of citizens and the principles of democracy and political pluralism.

The Ministers highlighted, *inter alia*, the danger of drugs and related problems, recognizing the importance of maintaining political dialogue on this issue at the highest level and agreeing on the need to strengthen the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP). The meeting called upon the international community to deal with the phenomenon of drugs through joint action based on the principle of global, shared responsibility. To that end, consideration and support were given to the proposal to hold a special session of the General Assembly in 1998 to address this crucial issue. Worldwide awareness of the need for joint action is reaching its peak, and Bolivia hopes that the proposed meeting will lay down positive guidelines to put an end to the scourge of drugs.

I am also pleased to inform representatives that on 3 and 4 September 1996, again in the Bolivian city of Cochabamba, the Meeting of Heads of State of the Rio

Group took place, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the creation of that standing body. It was a great honour for my country to welcome such illustrious guests.

The Presidents and Prime Minister gathered there noted with satisfaction that our region had made significant headway in fighting international crime. As evidence of this, they pointed to the signing in Caracas of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption, the results of the Specialized Inter-American Conference on Terrorism, held in Lima, and advances in the development of a hemispheric strategy against drugs and related crimes in the framework of the Inter-American Commission against Drug Abuse.

The Heads of State and Government expressed their satisfaction at the fact that our region had become the first nuclear-weapon-free zone through the adoption of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Final Declaration of the tenth summit expressed the joint position of the Governments of the region on the issues of representative democracy and the eradication of poverty. It placed on record their deep conviction with regard to sustainable development; it set forth precise guidelines on regional integration and trade; it expressed a firm resolve to press ahead in the fight against drugs and related crimes; it emphasized, in particular, the importance of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption; and it reiterated emphatically the crucial importance Governments, from their position of lofty responsibility, attached to cultural integration.

My delegation has requested that the Secretariat of the United Nations circulate the final document of the Cochabamba meeting to all delegations in the General Assembly.

With regard to the matter of the extraterritoriality of national laws, a most sensitive issue for peoples and Governments the world over, the Rio Group summit meeting expressed its rejection of any attempt to use a country's domestic legislation to impose unilateral sanctions of an extraterritorial character, as this contravenes the standards governing coexistence between States, disregards the fundamental principle of respect for sovereignty and is a clear violation of international law.

Bolivia is confident that intelligence and fairness will prevail on this delicate matter and that a solution will soon be found, in the interest of international coexistence and economic and commercial freedom for all peoples of the world.

One of the most outstanding international developments of our time was undoubtedly the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

With the aim of laying the groundwork for a hemispheric agenda for sustainable development, several international meetings, starting with the Summit held in Miami in 1994, have expressed support for the decision to hold a hemispheric meeting at the level of Heads of State and Government in the Bolivian city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, scheduled for 7 and 8 December of this year. That meeting will be a new opportunity to set the course of national and international endeavours for sustainable development in the light of economic, social and environmental goals and in reaffirmation of the importance of obtaining new and additional resources to finance the plan of action to be adopted.

Bolivia has offered to work its hardest alongside its sister nations to ensure the success of this major hemispheric event and is certain that inter-American solidarity will lead to positive results.

The agenda of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly contains more than 160 items of particular interest to the international community. My Government is prepared to participate constructively in the consideration and resolution of each of them.

We are concerned with problems of international peace and security and trust that the United Nations system will contribute effectively to finding solutions for the many parts of the world beset by conflicts and war.

As I stated on a previous occasion, Bolivia is of the view that many conflict situations can be explained by the persistence of unresolved social and national problems, as well as by the accumulation of age-old injustices and resentments; by geopolitical and economic interests that for decades have been fuelling confrontation from without and from within; and, above all, by Governments' inability to cooperate effectively so as to provide timely and peaceful solutions to the problems of greatest national concern.

We have participated in the debates on reforms of the United Nations Charter, and we believe that it is of the utmost importance to reach consensus in order to strengthen the multilateral system in the interests of the world community. We support the positions set forth by the Non-Aligned Movement in this regard.

Difficult international circumstances are making it increasingly clear that the United Nations needs to be strengthened, to adapt its structures and strengthen the Organization as a legitimate forum for the study, coordination, follow-up and implementation of universally accepted policies. Accordingly, Bolivia considers it essential to strengthen the General Assembly, the Security Council and the role of the International Court of Justice. With regard to the expansion of the Security Council, we consider it necessary that Germany and Japan be present as new permanent members and that three other permanent members from Asia, Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean be selected. The expansion should be complemented by an appropriate number of non-permanent members from the developing world. Of course, if consensus could be reached on other formulas, then other proposals, such as the one presented by Italy, would need to be considered.

With regard to the veto, Bolivia shares the view that, ideally, the international community should move towards eliminating this device — and, one would hope, in the not-too-distant future. In the meantime, use of this device should be strictly limited to actions relating to cases of threats to the peace, breach of the peace or acts of aggression referred to in Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.

Bolivia is greatly concerned about the political and social situation in many African countries. We express our solidarity with these countries, as we did to fraternal South Africa during its times of trial, and we urge the international community, especially the rich countries of the world, to cooperate generously and resolutely in order to cope with the grave economic problems of this continent.

We also express our solidarity with our brothers in the Middle East. We believe that the time has come to heal old wounds and frame the terms of a just and lasting peace, taking into account the need for secure borders for all and definitively resolving the situation through the creation of a Palestinian state. A solution must also be found to the questions of Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, and the territorial integrity and full sovereignty of all States of the region must be preserved.

We rejoice in the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina has embarked upon a new road to understanding, unity and construction of new democratic institutions.

The brotherly nations of Asia offer us remarkable examples of the possibilities and opportunities for accelerated economic development. Their successes fill us with confidence, and we are certain that they will apply the same wisdom to finding solutions to the social and political problems that some of them still face.

We are convinced that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, adopted by the General Assembly on 10 September of this year, represents a landmark along the road to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Bolivia has signed the papers of accession to the new Treaty and hopes to complete the constitutional procedures for its approval and ratification in a relatively short time.

We stress just as emphatically the need to ban the use and production of anti-personnel mines, which have been leaving a trail of blood among the peoples of the world.

The economic and social items before the Assembly also deserve our keenest interest, since they are among the essential tasks of the United Nations and of international cooperation. From our view of the international scene, questions pertaining to respect for human rights and democratic development in all countries are also matters of very high priority.

As representatives are aware, Bolivia has put forward its candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the period 1997-1998, the elections for which will be held during the present session of the General Assembly.

As a founding member of the United Nations, Bolivia carries the principles of the Charter deep within its national spirit and has maintained a policy of recognition of and support for this universal Organization. In recent years my country has contributed to the forces of United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ), as well as to the election-monitoring processes in El Salvador and Mozambique. We are also prepared to participate in United Nations standby arrangements. With regard to Haiti, Bolivia had the privilege of presiding over the ad hoc group of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Organization of American States and contributed police personnel during the first stage of the democratic normalization of that sister nation. Bolivia intends to continue participating in United Nations activities to foster international peace and cooperation.

In this regard, I am pleased to note that my country enjoys excellent, long-standing diplomatic relations with the five permanent members of the Security Council and that it plays an active part in the Non-Aligned Movement, whose thirty-fifth anniversary we have just celebrated in an expression of steadfastness in our convictions and in continued political cooperation.

We share common problems with developing countries, land-locked States and small States the world over. Our established friendship with all the countries of America, Africa, Asia, Europe and Oceania has enabled us to learn from their important experiences and better to understand their many problems.If our brother nations represented here see fit to honour us with their trust, Bolivia undertakes to place its particular dedication at the service of the international community in the Security Council.

As we move towards the end of the twentieth century and make preparations to welcome a new century and a new millennium, peoples and nations cannot ignore deep-rooted trends towards new and untrodden systems of human coexistence.

In that connection, we must ensure that small States participate actively in the international arena in promoting mankind's dream of making one out of many. That can occur only if the rules of the game are clearly defined and implemented and if effective worldwide instruments are created. It is here, in the existence of and respect for international law and justice and the institutions that embody them, that peoples, nations and States can find the only possible lodestar to guide them. Otherwise, they will be condemned to new and ominous forms of modern slavery. That is why Bolivia believes, today more than ever, in the validity of the United Nations and will work to the utmost to defending and strengthening it.

The President: Before calling on the next speaker, I should like to inform the Assembly that the representative of Palau has requested to participate in the general debate. Inasmuch as the list of speakers was closed on Wednesday, 25 September 1996, I would ask the Assembly if there is any objection to the inclusion of that delegation in the list of speakers for the general debate? If I hear none, I shall take it that Palau is to be included in the list of speakers.

It was so decided.

The President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia, His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab.

Mr. Gurirab (Namibia): Your election, Mr. President, represents a fitting tribute to you personally for your well-known qualities as a consummate diplomat and to Malaysia for its constructive role in world affairs and remarkable success in economic development and social integration at home.

I cannot forget the skilful and decisive role you played as President of the Security Council, in defence of our interests, against attempts aimed at weakening the effectiveness of the United Nations Transition Assistance Group in Namibia. Our two countries have since joined hands in cooperative relations, which are growing from strength to strength. I congratulate you and wish you every success in your challenging task.

Your Prime Minister, Mr. Mahathir Mohamad, is a great friend of the Namibian people. His eloquent voice illuminates the burning international issues advocated by the South. It also serves to define most clearly the basis of South-North dialogue, as well as the vital work being done for the developing countries by the Group of 77 and China.

Your predecessor, Mr. Diogo Feitas do Amaral, earned himself a place of honour in the annals of history by presiding over the fiftieth commemorative session of the General Assembly. I commend him for his valuable efforts and constructive contribution.

Our illustrious Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, has been a devoted champion of the Charter of the United Nations, a firm reformer and an indefatigable promoter of peace, social development and peacekeeping throughout the world. Africa holds the Secretary-General in high esteem and supports his tireless efforts in behalf of peace and a better future for humanity, an outlook that is common to the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the United Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement.

At the most recent OAU summit, held at Yaoundé, African leaders demonstrated unity and solidarity by endorsing Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali for reelection as Secretary-General of the United Nations. Namibia stands behind that decision.

The fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations was a celebration of the success and durability of our Organization. At the same time, it was a celebration of the triumph of the will and determination of world leaders and citizens alike to conquer tyranny, hegemony, poverty, illiteracy, social inequities and underdevelopment amidst the wealth and knowledge that abound in the world.

President Nujoma had this to say last year, from this rostrum:

> "During the past 50 years, this Organization has served humanity as a universal market-place of great ideas and collective action." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 35th meeting, p. 10)*

President Nujoma has also said that the promotion of world peace and security was meant to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and, moreover, to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. These are living commitments for all nations and peoples and must be realized fully. They bind us together as members of one human race and as each other's keepers.

You, Mr. President, issued a charge to the fifty-first session of the General Assembly in your acceptance speech on 17 September 1996. I thought its essence was encapsulated in these words, which seemed to echo what my leader had said:

> "The United Nations must begin to embed itself in reality and push the critical issues, especially poverty and social injustice, to the centre of national and public debate. What will it take to do this? Of immediate need is political will by Member States to commit to the principles of democracy and accountability. The nature of democratic practice needed for such an enterprise is one based on careful deliberation and consultation so that compromise to the lowest value is minimized in favour of optimizing the best options that will protect universal values." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-First Session, Plenary Meetings, first meeting, p. 4)*

I could hardly agree more with those sentiments.

I shall never be convinced, and I shall never succumb to the notion, that nuclear weapons assure world peace and security, development, prosperity or equality among nations. On the contrary, I am convinced that peace, disarmament, democracy, multilateral cooperation and resource allocation can unleash human ingenuity and industry for development and social progress.

It is for these reasons that Namibia insists on complete nuclear disarmament in all respects. The other day I signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty on behalf of the Republic of Namibia, not out of complete satisfaction but to encourage the ongoing work towards disarmament, bearing in mind the constructive and timely advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on nuclear weapons, as well as the Treaties of Pelindaba, Rarotonga and Tlatelolco, which created nuclear-free zones in Africa, the South Pacific and Latin America respectively.

Africa is bleeding, just as the souls of our people, the African people, are burning in misery and mayhem. Their precious humanity and lives have been denuded of dignity and worth. How long must this carnage and dehumanization be allowed to continue in Somalia, Burundi and other tormented places in Africa?

The glimmer of hope in Liberia engendered by the recently concluded peace accord, brokered by States members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the inauguration of Mrs. Ruth Perry as the first-ever woman Head of State in Africa, must not be snatched away again by unscrupulous power-grabbers and political opportunists. Rather, the newly inaugurated Head of State must be given all the support she needs to pursue a national course of democratization, reconciliation and reconstruction for all Liberians.

The long-standing partnership and cooperation between the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations should be brought to bear in the emerging favourable situation in Liberia with a view to stabilizing the transition and to preventing any military reversals. Just as peacekeeping cannot be successful without international involvement, so also do regional post-conflict peace-building and reconstruction depend on international support to be successful. It is here where preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and peacemaking come together to do good for all.

Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim, the very able and hardworking Secretary-General of the OAU, is anxious to apply in all those conflict situations, the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. But he is short of resources, including personnel, as well as of appropriate capacity to do the job. Namibia will continue to make its contribution in spite of its limited means. We urge the international community to render generous assistance to the OAU for this purpose.

Drug trafficking is a horrendous killer disease which permeates the social fabric of society. Drug lords are notorious gangsters not unlike those responsible for organized crime, with corrupting inroads into Governments, businesses and civil society, targeting youth, students and even small children. The member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) recently signed a protocol on drug trafficking in our region and agreed to coordinate their law enforcement efforts to combat this menace jointly.

Today, the risk of dying due to anti-personnel landmines in many parts of the world has increased astronomically. This risk exists in southern Africa as well, mainly in Angola, but also in Mozambique and Namibia. This is another area in which SADC is combining the efforts of its members with a view to regional initiatives.

Cooperation between SADC and the European Union has made it possible for us to benefit from resources and expertise to deal more effectively with this very serious problem. That is why Namibia welcomes the initiative taken on this matter by my colleague, Mr. Klaus Kinkel, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany, and supports his Seven-Point-Action Programme on Anti-Personnel Mines.

In this connection, we encourage other ongoing initiatives aimed at banning anti-personnel landmines, as well as the commendable work which some countries are doing in the field of demining, including in Namibia. Namibia therefore supports the inclusion of a ban on anti-personnel landmines in the agenda of the forthcoming session of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

In the interest of democratization and national reconciliation, and in order to mitigate the existing harsh and racially biased social disparities which we inherited from the apartheid order, Namibia has been pleading with the United Nations and the rest of the international community for least-developed country status. So far, this plea has remained unheeded in the main, but, to be fair, not entirely. While renewing our plea, it is worth acknowledging with appreciation the implementation of General Assembly resolution 46/204, concerning "as if" least-developed country status, which has aided Namibia in some constructive ways. This was made possible by United Nations Member States, as well as by specialized agencies. We thank them all for their support and also for having extended the "as if" least-developed status for an additional three years.

We believe, as most do, that economic growth, job creation, human resource development and gender equality must be visible and qualitative in content as critical weapons against social dislocations and strife.

Without exception, during last year's fiftieth anniversary commemoration of the founding of the United Nations, world leaders dealt, one way or another, with the democratization, restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations. This was as it ought to be. Systemic reform of the United Nations was already overdue decades ago.

While the reform process itself is still very much on course, its forward momentum seems to have been deflected for one reason or another.

The common position shared by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Non-Aligned Movement and other fair-minded bodies and persons is based on the principle of equitable representation and transparency in terms of decision-making at all levels of our Organization.

In this context, Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean each deserve to be allocated at least two permanent seats on the Security Council, as well as a concomitant increase of non-permanent seats in the spirit of democracy and fairness. Namibia has already expressed on a number of occasions a position on the addition of Japan and Germany as permanent members of the Security Council, but not in isolation of the representation envisaged for the aforementioned three continents.

At the same time, Namibia believes that the General Assembly was not meant by the authors of the United Nations Charter to play second fiddle to any of the other principal organs. It is a universal parliament of equal members with the same preoccupation for world peace and security, as well as for human survival and prosperity.

It stands to reason, therefore, that United Nations reform must not end up by making the Assembly a rubber stamp of other principal organs, be it the Security Council or the Economic and Social Council. We should like, in the end, to see well-balanced and mutually complementary organs and institutions of the United Nations system.

Multilateralism is the essence of the United Nations system. Decisions taken by the majority of Member States should not be changed in the interest of a few through administrative fiat. It is for the General Assembly itself, if need be, to reconsider or to change any programme activities or personnel requirements approved previously.

In addition to reaffirming their continued commitment to and strengthening, of South-South cooperation, the member States of the Group of 77 and China, in their latest report, renewed their call for a just and predictable multilateral trading system that would ensure the complete integration of the economies of the South into the world economy and the emerging international trading system.

To this end, the South attaches great importance to the first Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, to be held in Singapore in December 1996. Namibia strongly supports this meeting.

The 1993 Israeli-Palestinian peace accord and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority raised hopes for lasting peace in the Middle East. Regrettably, bloodshed and enmity are once again threatening to derail the Middle East peace process.

Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Arafat cannot afford to waste one more minute. An urgent one-on-one meeting and joint action, which ought to be routine, to end the vicious circle of violence should take place without delay. The first step in this direction is putting an immediate end to the creation of new settlements and to the reconstruction work in the Old City of Jerusalem. The initiators as well as the supporters of the Madrid peace process should also bring their weight to bear towards restoring the partnership for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement, in the best interest of all parties in the Middle East, especially in the exercise of self-determination by the Palestinians and the establishment of an independent state of their own.

And, of course, we are not forgetting Bosnia. Namibia hopes that the progress achieved so far will continue and will eventually lead to lasting peace and reconciliation in the area.

Namibia cannot have a split personality on the question of self-determination and decolonization. Western Sahara is crying out for self-determination and decolonization. Only when these goals are fully realized can Africa and the United Nations boast of the complete political emancipation of our beloved continent.

Namibia welcomes the high-level contacts that the Kingdom of Morocco and the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) have commenced. I should like to entreat them to maintain and invigorate these encouraging political talks. The objective we would all like to see implemented, I believe, is the early holding of a United Nations-sponsored referendum in which only the authentic Saharawis will be able to express their unfettered will and assume their destiny.

There is an extensive update on Angola in the Secretary-General's annual report. In his important statement of 23 September 1996 to this Assembly, my colleague, Venancio de Moura, Foreign Minister of Angola, provided representatives with useful additional information on the worrisome situation in his country, inclusive of constitutional and political issues.

I can hardly add to this information. For Namibia, nonetheless, the suffering of our Angolan brothers and sisters, not to mention the children, is of paramount concern. The other concern we have in Namibia is about the fast-approaching deadline of the presence of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM III) in Angola, which includes financial implications arising out of the obstacles and delays which keep cropping up in the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol. Be that as it may, Namibia is bound by blood and common destiny to stand with Angola. That is why our military contingent attached to UNAVEM III will remain in Angola until the Mission is satisfactorily concluded.

This week, the leaders of the Southern African Development Community Organ on Politics, Defence and Security, under the co-chairmanship of President Robert Mugabe, will meet in Luanda to exchange views on the critical situation in Angola and its implications for the region, the United Nations and the world at large. President Nujoma will attend this crucial and timely meeting.

Before concluding, let me say that an enduring challenge for the United Nations, now and into the next century, is to reactivate multilateralism as the centrepiece of international relations and constructive cooperation in the emerging world order.

This new world order cannot be built with a cold war mind-set characterized by confrontation, military intervention, economic blockade and political assassinations. There is no place for it in today's world of cooperation and open trade.

The General Assembly, where all United Nations Member States are represented, is the ideal forum for resolving the conflicts of interest of the haves and the have-nots, guided by the principles of equality, justice and equity for all.

Finally, let me end with President Nujoma's concluding words, spoken here last year:

> "The future belongs to the youth and children. Our collective duty must be to reinforce their vision for a peaceful, harmonious and prosperous future in the spirit of brotherhood and cooperation". *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 35th meeting, p. 10)*

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, His Excellency Mr. Ali Alatas.

Mr. Alatas (Indonesia): It is with great pleasure that I extend my delegation's heartfelt congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. We are deeply gratified to see an eminent representative of a brotherly neighbouring country and fellow member of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) preside over our sessions. Your election to this high office is also a well-deserved recognition of your personal qualities and professional accomplishments, as well as of the role and stature of Malaysia in regional and global affairs.

May I also extend our felicitations to your predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, for so ably presiding over the historic fiftieth session.

Let me avail myself of this opportunity to pay tribute to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali for his many accomplishments, his untiring efforts in the cause of peace and development and the sagacity with which he is steering the Organization during these challenging times.

During the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations last year, we noted a resurgence of hope and optimism in the international community as we reviewed the achievements of the world Organization, made in spite of the many constraints with which it has been saddled. We renewed our determination to strengthen the United Nations and rededicated ourselves to the vision of world peace that inspired its founding, as well as to the ideals and principles enshrined in its Charter. That act of rededication was timely and necessary. For, since the demise of the cold war, the world has been in the grip of massive changes that have given rise to new challenges and contradictory trends in international relations. At the same time, new vistas have emerged and a deepening sense of interdependence has prompted nations to devise more realistic and more mutually beneficial patterns of cooperation.

Yet, while these developments have revived expectations of a more peaceful and secure world, the acute reality is that our planet is still far from being a peaceful place. Violent conflicts continue to embroil many regions of the globe. Nation States and international institutions are frantically struggling to adjust to drastically changed and changing political and economic circumstances. Weapons of mass destruction still pose a potent threat of worldwide catastrophe. In view of all these, it is no wonder that, after a momentary resurgence of hope, we are again being overtaken by a sense of frustration and common vulnerability.

The primordial challenge of our time, therefore, is to devise a more effective system of global governance in order to manage the demands and the vicissitudes of globalization and interdependence. As emphasized in a statement recently issued by 16 Heads of State or Government, including the President of Indonesia, nations should rise from their immediate concerns, focus on their common long-term interests and break new ground. Constructive initiatives are needed, and multilateralism has to be reasserted and strengthened.

Not even global cooperation, however, can meet the needs and expectations of people without a stronger United Nations to give coherence to such cooperation. World governance, therefore, in order to be effective and acceptable to all, must be fashioned with the United Nations as its principal mechanism and source of legitimacy. The revitalization of this international institution through a comprehensive process of restructuring and democratization of its major organs and functions has therefore become imperative.

It is of pivotal importance that the General Assembly, the highest deliberative and decision-making organ within the United Nations system, should function effectively. Indeed, strengthening the role of the General Assembly is a basic premise of the current process of United Nations reform and revitalization.

Just as crucial is the reform of the Security Council so as to allow it to reflect contemporary realities and to accommodate the interests and concerns of developing countries, which comprise the overwhelming majority of the Organization. It is an anachronism and a gross anomaly that Europe is overrepresented, Asia underrepresented and Africa and Latin America not represented at all on the Council's roster of permanent members. In our view, new permanent members should be chosen on the basis not only of equitable geographic representation, but also of such criteria as political, economic and demographic weight, their capability and proven track record of contributing to the promotion of peace, security and development, both regionally and globally, and their commitment to assuming responsibilities inherent to permanent membership.

The Economic and Social Council is now being revitalized so that it will have a more dynamic relationship with the General Assembly and other United Nations bodies. Yet, regrettably, it is still unable effectively to fulfil its crucial role, notably in helping United Nations Members adjust to the complex demands of globalization. The reforms and adjustments that the Economic and Social Council is undergoing should be further strengthened to enhance its cooperation not only with other United Nations bodies but also with such important international agencies as the Bretton Woods institutions.

All these efforts to revitalize, reform and democratize the United Nations, however, will come to naught if in the end the United Nations is paralysed by financial insolvency. If the current financial plight of the United Nations continues — and it will continue as long as certain major Member States refuse to remit their legally-obligated contributions — there is a real danger that peacekeeping operations will collapse and many endeavours to maintain peace and security will be compromised. The very functioning of the United Nations itself could be severely undermined and the purposes of the reform process seriously jeopardized. No organization can be reformed by starving it. Ironically, the countries that are pressing the hardest for cutbacks and reforms have themselves refused to finance the new austerity budget. For more than five decades the United Nations and related institutions have been engaged in an immense array of activities that touch every aspect of people's lives all over the world. If those vital statistics, too, must be terminated because of the Organization's insolvency, that would constitute an enormous human tragedy.

Nuclear arsenals of enormously destructive power continue to pose a threat to all life on Earth. We believe that the time has come for the Conference on Disarmament to establish a special committee for negotiations on a programme of nuclear disarmament and the ultimate elimination of all nuclear weapons within a definite time-frame. In this regard, it is my hope that the recent Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the illegality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons will serve as a catalyst towards this end.

The 10 countries of South-East Asia recently made a substantive contribution to the cause of nuclear disarmament. During the historic Bangkok summit of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the seven ASEAN leaders, together with the leaders of Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar, signed the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. ASEAN is now working for the Treaty's early entry into force. We hope that the nuclear Powers will soon endorse the Treaty by acceding to its Protocol. Thus, with the conclusion of Treaties for nuclear-weapon-free zones in South-East Asia and Africa, in addition to the Antarctic, Rarotonga and Tlatelolco Treaties, a large segment of the southern hemisphere should become free of the nuclear menace. As for chemical weapons, I am pleased to inform the General Assembly that Indonesia is now at the final stage of the process of ratifying the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Another positive development was the signing a few days ago of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) after two and a half years of arduous negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament. Indeed, for the past three decades, the international community unceasingly stressed the need for such a treaty in an endeavour to stem the horizontal and vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons. The Treaty outlaws nuclear-test explosions by all States in all environments for all time, ensures that the ban is effective and verifiable and provides new ground for the realization of the objectives set by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Having become a reality through broad compromises, however, the Treaty is still a far cry from the CTBT long-envisioned by the international community. It still allows the most sophisticated form of nuclear-weapon testing: simulation. In a strict sense, therefore, it is not truly comprehensive, nor does it directly address the issue of nuclear disarmament. But it does limit the nuclear-arms race by making it more difficult for countries to develop or improve their arsenals. Moreover, humankind cannot afford to dispense with the CTBT, imperfect as it may be. Our collective experience in the disarmament endeavour has been that, if we pass over an existing opportunity in favour of a better one that is yet to be, we suffer a costly delay and possibly an irretrievable setback. Having signed the Treaty on that basis, Indonesia fervently hopes that it will eventually be supported by the entire membership and thereby become an effective instrument to enable us to move towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Focal points of conflict still persist in many parts of the globe. In the Middle East, the peace process is on the verge of collapse as a highly volatile and explosive situation in the Israeli-occupied Arab territories threatens once more to engulf the region in all-too-familiar violence and bloodshed, which we had hoped had become part of the past. Israel's provocative action of opening a new entrance to the tunnel along the Western Wall of the Al-Aqsa Mosque has triggered a violent confrontation, resulting in death and injuries to scores of civilians. Further aggravating the situation is the unprecedented armed clash between the Israeli army and the Palestinian police. These are but the latest manifestations of a rapid deterioration of the situation due to Israel's reneging on its previous commitments and its blatant backtracking on its obligations under the 1993 Declaration of Principles and subsequent agreements.

Israel must be prevailed upon to honour the Declaration of Principles and its subsequent agreements and to resume negotiations in earnest on the remaining issues and the final status of the occupied territories, including Jerusalem. Once again, we emphasize that progress on the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese tracks of the negotiations, attended by unconditional withdrawal of Israel from the Syrian Golan Heights and southern Lebanon, constitutes a *conditio sine qua non* for comprehensive and lasting peace in the region.

The recent elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, made possible by the cessation of hostilities as a result of the Dayton and Paris peace Agreements, have brought the country nearer to reconciliation and paved the way for the creation of durable national institutions.

However, we are concerned that, especially in the Serb-held areas, the results of the election may lead to the legitimizing of ethnic separation. It is therefore incumbent upon the international community to ensure the unity and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a multicultural, multi-ethnic and multireligious society. For the peace Agreement to be implementable, obstructions to freedom of movement must be removed and refugees allowed freely to return to their homes. Bosnian Serb leaders must yield their illicit control over segments of the population and territory of the country. The parties to the peace Agreement must ensure that those indicted by the International Tribunal are brought to justice.

In the Gulf region, we have recently witnessed unilateral military action by extraregional Powers interfering with the internal affairs of a Member State of the United Nations. My delegation wishes to reiterate its firm commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, in this case Iraq. Actions that are inconsistent with these basic norms and principles of inter-State relations, which are enshrined in the United Nations Charter, are clearly unacceptable. I should also like to seize this occasion to urge Iraq to comply fully with all relevant Security Council resolutions.

Earlier this month, almost a quarter of a century of conflict in the southern Philippines came to a peaceful end with the signing of a peace agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Moro National Liberation Front, with Indonesia serving as facilitator on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference Ministerial Committee of the Six. This positive development, which will bring peace and prosperity to the southern Philippines, also constitutes another important step towards the realization of a politically stable, socially cohesive and economically progressive South-East Asia that is increasingly able to deal with its own problems in its own way.

We are now living in an era of globalization and interdependence, an era replete with challenges but also full of promise. How it came about is no mystery. It had been creeping up on us for quite some time, the consequence of rapid advances in science and technology, particularly in communications and transport. The end of the cold war and the dismantling of the barriers of bloc politics and ideological contention unleashed the full force of globalization. Since then, global trade and production have been boosted to new heights while goods, people and capital are moving from one country to another more freely than ever. Globalization has thus raised the hopes of humankind with visions of a new world of opportunities and more equitable prosperity.

These hopes are not without foundation. In a global economy that is gradually recovering from recession, the developed countries, according to the 1996 Economic and Social Survey, have shown average gross-national-product growth rates of two per cent. The developing countries have registered a significant 6 per cent growth while the economic dynamos of East and South-East Asia have been credited with a stunning 8 per cent growth. These are the trade-driven economies that have benefited most from globalization.

Yet, the apprehensions about globalization are equally justified. In an external environment over which developing countries have very little control, globalization could widen the prosperity gap between the developed and the developing countries. The fact that globalization can also lead to disaster was demonstrated not too long ago when the global operations of financial markets led to instability and volatility that sent shock waves through the monetary systems of developing countries. In their efforts to integrate themselves into the global economy, many developing countries have found it necessary to make structural adjustments that too often entail exorbitant social and human costs. Moreover, globalization has not mitigated and may have, on the contrary, exacerbated the inequities and imbalances in international economic relations. Bereft of a favourable external environment for their national development efforts, many developing countries continue to languish in poverty, backwardness, stagnation and even negative economic growth. Every year, 13 to 18 million people, mostly children in developing countries, die from hunger and poverty-related causes. Meanwhile, the developing countries remain marginalized from the international decision-making processes that would fashion global solutions to the global economic problems that afflict them.

The poignant experience of the past three and a half decades teaches us that these problems cannot be solved through palliatives and piecemeal reforms. Since the major problems of development are global in nature, they can only be effectively dealt with through a new global partnership for development involving all countries, of both the developed North and the developing South, on the basis of mutual interest and equitable sharing of benefits and responsibility.

It has been more than two years since the successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations, but the promise of an equitable, transparent and rule-based multilateral trading system, as embodied in the World Trade Organization (WTO), has yet to be realized. Moreover, we are alarmed at the tendency of some developed countries to resort to a new form of protectionism in the guise of linking labour standards and other social and environmental concerns to trade. Such efforts will not only harm the developing countries, but will also ultimately debilitate the WTO itself. We therefore call upon all trading partners to refrain from overloading the agenda of the first Ministerial Meeting of the WTO in Singapore this coming December with issues extraneous to trade. Let us together nurture the WTO as the guardian of a predictable, non-discriminatory multilateral trading system and the guarantor of the rights of the weaker trading partner against unilateral and arbitrary actions by the strong.

In this context, we share the concern expressed by the international community at the practice of some countries of promulgating national laws with extraterritorial application that adversely impact on the legitimate interests of other countries. We cannot accept the imposition of the law of the strong in place of dialogue and negotiation. No one country, no matter how powerful, should be allowed unilaterally to regulate the lives of other sovereign countries.

The biggest single deterrent to development in many of the world's poorest countries is the crushing effect of their debt burdens. Indonesia has long advocated a set of principles for managing the debt problem, calling for a "once-and-for-all" settlement of the debt problems of developing countries, including multilateral debts, as well as the cancellation of the debts of the most severely affected, low-income developing countries. In this context, we welcome and support the joint proposal of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which offers effective alternatives for reducing the overall debt burdens of heavily indebted poor countries to sustainable levels. While this initiative could be further refined, it is Indonesia's fervent hope that, at the forthcoming meetings of the World Bank and the IMF, this proposal will finally receive the support that it needs and deserves from the developed countries. In this context, I am encouraged by the developments at the IMF meetings in Washington today.

Social development and social justice remain elusive dreams for millions of impoverished people throughout the world. Indonesia shares that dream and abides by the commitments it assumed at the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, both of which were held last year. We have indeed dedicated ...

Mr. Turnquest (Bahamas), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We have, indeed, dedicated ourselves to the proposition that people should not only be the beneficiaries of development but should also be given every opportunity to become the authors of their own development. At the same time we should address, through concrete and concerted international action, the problem of the global trade in illicit drugs and other forms of transnational crime. Above all, we must continue to address the problems of poverty and underdevelopment, and we must commit ourselves fully to genuine partnership.

This century that is about to end will perhaps be remembered for both the cruelty of its wars and the tremendous achievements that it has seen in science and technology — although it is not for these achievements that we should be proud of it. To my mind, what makes this century special is the fact that during this time the human race truly began to nurture the idea that poverty is not an inevitable part of the human condition, but that it can be conquered and wiped off the face of the Earth. We have the natural resources and the mental and organizational capacity to succeed at that task. The question has always been whether we have the political will to do it, and whether we are concerned and enlightened enough to form an equitable global partnership for development — for a concerted struggle against poverty that will give a deeper and brighter meaning to globalization and interdependence. The answer, I believe, is largely in the hands of the General Assembly.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Benin, His Excellency Mr. Pierre Osho.

Mr. Osho (Benin) (*interpretation from French*): Like the speakers who have preceded me at this rostrum, I wish to extend to you, Sir, the warm and sincere congratulations of the delegation of Benin to the President on his unanimous selection to preside over the work of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. This choice constitutes clear recognition of his exceptional personal qualities and his wealth of experience as a seasoned diplomat, and it is a collective tribute to his beautiful country, Malaysia, whose dynamism and outstanding economic success over the past few years I salute. From the rostrum of this Assembly, I should like to make a contribution to this important session by expressing a message of peace, solidarity, faith and hope from the people and the Government of Benin.

A year ago, in this very Hall, in commemoration of its fiftieth anniversary, the United Nations hosted the greatest gathering of Heads of State in history. In this setting they carried out a critical, objective and unsparing assessment of the 50 years of the Organization's existence, a period during which international cooperation made it possible to achieve significant progress on each of the principles enshrined in the Charter. In the Declaration they adopted, the Heads of State and Government solemnly reaffirmed their dedication to the great ideals of peace, development and democracy inscribed in the founding texts of the Organization.

Given this commitment by world leaders on the threshold of a new millennium, the imperative of peace must, more than ever, remain the ultimate goal of the international community as a whole. This is all the more urgent because, despite the end of the cold war, the peace and security of nations seem far from being fully assured. Indeed, in many respects, on the political and security level the international situation remains worrying, especially on the African continent, where the course of history too often bears the imprint of tragic events to which the international community cannot remain indifferent.

The resurgence of conflicts which, for the most part, no longer take place between States but within nations, is a challenge for which the Organization must adopt new methods and machinery for intervention and settlement. This means, therefore, that to be able to promote harmonious relations among the peoples of the world and to guarantee a lasting peace, our shared Organization must strengthen its capabilities and its means in conflict prevention, peacekeeping and the consolidation of peace. It cannot be stressed enough that, despite the difficulties, inadequacies and gaps that reduce or restrict the scope and effectiveness of its actions, the United Nations represents, embodies and remains — today and, doubtless, for a long time to come — the body that can best express and bring to a successful conclusion the will of Member States to work for the consolidation of peace and the pursuit of economic and social progress.

Despite the new international situation that promotes less aggressive, less suspicious and less tense relations between States, the political instability that continues to exist in certain parts of Africa, and the conflicts that develop there, have become significant barriers to the economic recovery and social cohesion of the continent. In this context, I wish to refer to the very worrying situation in Burundi, where the unjust system of socio-ethnic relations, military intransigence and political intolerance pointlessly prolong the suffering and division of a people. It is deplorable that on 25 July 1996 a military coup ended, by force, Burundi's constitutional, democratic and legal institutions.

My country, Benin, welcomes the strong and courageous reaction of the countries of the subregion and encourages their efforts for a peaceful, just and lasting settlement of the crisis in Burundi.

Benin supports the efforts of the Heads of State of countries of the Great Lakes region and of the Organization of African Unity to make the new authorities in Burundi quickly embark on negotiations and abide by decisions which should result from constructive and sound concerted action on the part of the healthy forces of this battered people. The various protagonists must understand that only a new political agreement, based on ordinary common sense, with respect for the intangible principles of democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms, will contribute to an acceptable solution to all.

Regarding the situation in Liberia, the summit meeting of the Committee of Nine on Liberia of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), held on 17 August 1996, took important decisions to extend the Abuja Agreements of 1995, which are rightly considered to be the appropriate legal framework for a definitive settlement of the conflict. This last Abuja summit also drew up a new timetable for the implementation of the peace process, and defined the modalities and stages to lead to democratic elections. Benin urgently demands that the Liberian factions take advantage of this last opportunity and strictly abide by the Abuja decisions, in order to speed up the return of their country to normality.

My country also invites the international community to support the efforts of ECOWAS by stepping up its financial and logistical assistance for the successful implementation of the Abuja decisions.

The most important thing for a nation in crisis is the search for compromise to settle internal contradictions, no matter how serious they are. This truth has been tried and tested elsewhere, in Mozambique for example, and recently in Angola, the results of which we note with satisfaction. Hence the appeal which I am renewing here, before this Assembly, for sincere dialogue in Rwanda, Somalia, the Sudan, Sierra Leone, the Middle East — in a word, wherever passions continue at the end of the twentieth century to cloud reason and block the genuine struggle for development and democracy.

Everyone agrees that peace, if it is to be genuine and lasting, must be based on general and complete disarmament under international control. Here, I should like to say how gratified Benin is at the signature of the Pelindaba Treaty for the establishment of an African nuclear-weapon-free zone.

The Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), held from 17 April to 12 May 1995, decided to renew the Treaty indefinitely, thus opening the way to better prospects in the area of nuclear disarmament. Benin, which has worked for this, believes in the strengthening of the provisions of the Treaty, in particular regarding the verification regime, in order to make it a genuine international instrument for effective nuclear disarmament and a solid basis for more fruitful international cooperation in the area of the use of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

While the commitment to non-proliferation and disarmament has been gaining ground throughout the globe, the resumption or continuation of nuclear tests painfully reminded us of the dangers and horrors which haunted the collective psyche of nations during the cold-war period. This is why Benin can only welcome the positive decision taken by France and recently by the People's Republic of China to put an end to their nuclear testing programmes.

The signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty during the present session will most certainly mark a major stage in the achievement of an objective which is decisive, even vital, for the international community: that of disarmament and non-proliferation.

As we can read in the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations,

> "action to ensure peace, security and stability in the world will be futile unless the economic and social needs of people are addressed." (*resolution 50/6, para. 1*)

This means that peace comes to nothing if the imperative of development is not guaranteed. Here, it is important to emphasize that many countries in Africa have made considerable progress in the key areas of protecting mothers and their children, of health, of nutrition and of education, but, from one end of the continent to the other, gains continue to be drastically limited as a result of endemic poverty and economic regression.

Recent developments in the global economy and the serious obstacles encountered by the efforts of the developing countries, particularly the least-developed countries, are a cause of profound concern for us as Africans.

The accelerated globalization of the rules and practices of the system of market economies has led to the emergence of a new economic order within which Africa, for the most part, remains marginalized. The agreements of the Uruguay Round concluded in 1994, the rapid redefinition of economic groupings in the developed countries, and the ever more important role of private capital in the world economy, have created a new international environment in which the interests of Africa do not seem to have been taken into account, or in which they are even threatened or compromised.

While it is true that socio-economic development in Africa is first of all the responsibility of the peoples and Governments of the African countries themselves, it none the less remains true that the international community, in particular its most developed and industrialized members, must do their part, a part commensurate with their true means, in the development process of a continent involved in a dual economic and political transition.

At a time when one has reason to fear the resurgence of national selfishness, the temptations of protectionism and of isolationism, the international community should provide a clear response, a concrete solution that can be rapidly applied to the problems experienced by the developing world, in particular Africa. These well-known problems include the burden of foreign debt, the alarming reduction in capital flows, the trend toward a decline in official development assistance, the weak rate of investment, the continued imbalance in the terms of trade — despite the devaluation of the CFA Franc in January 1994 — protectionism on export markets, continued weak commodities prices, and so on.

We have every right to be pleased that over the last five years, the struggle to eradicate poverty has been a prominent issue in negotiations and the drafting of declarations and programmes of action adopted by summits and conferences organized under the auspices of the United Nations.

As we approach the end of the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty and the beginning next year, 1997, of the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, new national and international efforts must be made to mobilize the vast resources needed to eliminate poverty.

In addition, as the decisions and recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) are implemented, they will be tangible assets for present and future generations in the process of building a more human and better society through exercise of the right to adequate housing for all.

Environmental protection is essential if we are to promote sustainable development. Faced with the threat to mankind posed by the rise in sea levels, global warming, creeping desertification and the disappearance of biological diversity, Benin attaches the utmost importance to implementation of all the agreements reached in Rio and, here, renews its commitment to doing all it can to ensure the success of the special session of the General Assembly planned for June 1997 to strengthen implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the Earth Summit contained in Agenda 21. In accordance with the commitments made at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in June 1992 in Rio, by the end of the year Benin will have adopted its own national Agenda 21 and, at the same time, will begin drawing up local Agendas 21.

In the context of the effective implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Convention to Control Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, the Government of Benin held a national forum from 20 to 22 August 1996 which was the starting point for the process of drawing up its national programme of action to combat desertification through a partnership of Government, local populations, non-governmental organizations, development associations, the private sector and development partners.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank the interim secretariat of the Convention and, above all, the Government of Germany and the United Nations Development Programme, whose technical and financial support proved decisive in the holding of this successful forum.

It is regrettable that five years after it was launched, the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s has not had the expected impact on the development of Africa even though the priorities our States opted for were largely in line with its objectives, including in the area of democratic and macroeconomic reforms.

This is why Benin welcomes the launching by the Secretary-General on 15 March 1996 of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, an initiative that complements the New Agenda and provides it with new impetus. I should like here to reaffirm Benin's adherence to this Initiative whose objectives fit perfectly with those of our national development plans. Implementation of the priority actions of the Initiative require the mobilization of Africans themselves, bodies of the United Nations system and Africa's development partners to ensure ambitious, concerted and coordinated action designed to lead to tangible results in Africa.

We applaud the initiatives of the United Nations system which has long been working for the development of Africa, as well as the actions of all partners for the development of Africa, including France and Japan, which have made the development and economic recovery of Africa a priority.

We appeal to all Member States diligently to implement the results of the mid-term review of United Nations New Agenda in order to accelerate the process of strengthening the effective integration of Africa into the international trading system, help Africa diversify its economy and encourage direct foreign investment.

Along the same lines, The Agenda for Development, which Benin actively helped to draft, should be effectively implemented to achieve the development objectives of developing countries, the least-developed countries in particular.

Massive and persistent human rights violations are today both source and consequence of ethnic, racial and religious tensions which continue to persist in certain parts of the globe, particularly on our continent, Africa. The Government of Benin considers that all States, whatever their political system, their economic level and their culture, have a duty to promote, protect and respect human rights and fundamental freedoms. In this regard, Benin reaffirms its deep commitment to respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, whose promotion and protection are a legitimate concern of the international community.

For our part, we in Benin have continued to strive to consolidate our new democratic experience which has been in place since the historic National Conference of Active Forces of the Nation in February 1990.

I know that all members have been following with interest, and are well informed about, the deep-seated qualitative changes in the political life of Benin and I wish to take advantage of this opportunity to thank everyone for the genuine interest with which they have followed our major political event: the recent presidential election in March 1996, in which we could see a peaceful and orderly democratic transfer of power, without violence or bloodshed, which was totally in keeping with the rule of constitutional law in force since December 1990. The generally correct and normal conduct of the ballot, the peaceful behaviour of the vast majority of our political classes, the courageous and responsible attitude of the people of Benin and the unwavering stance taken continually by the Constitutional Court are all signs which demonstrate genuine political maturity and an irrevocable commitment to building a truly democratic society in the Republic of Benin.

To complete its programme of building a State based on the rule of law and a prosperous nation in which all citizens of Benin would enjoy a certain minimum standard of living, the Government of Benin wishes to benefit further from the support and assistance of the entire international community. We are well aware of the fact that merely going through the motions of an election is not enough to install and guarantee lasting democracy in a country.

For democracy to have real meaning and for a people to fully enjoy the freedom and salvation it brings, it must be expressed both on the national and international levels. This means that democracy must also underlie and govern the organization and conduct of international relations. The world, so long divided by East-West antagonism and by North-South imbalances, can and must conceive and implement new, democratic relations among States. Here it is no exaggeration to say that the renewal of the United Nations begun thanks to the courageous, tenacious and fruitful actions of Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali must be resolutely sustained and developed to guarantee the conditions necessary for the harmonious pursuit of the process of democratization in international society on the eve of the twenty-first century. The delegation of Benin is convinced that our present deliberations on all issues of reform of the Organization will be guided by our shared determination to take concerted, specific and realistic measures which, better than in the past, respond to the great stakes and challenges emerging on the horizon of the twenty-first century.

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, His Excellency Mr. Josef Zieleniec.

Mr. Zieleniec (Czech Republic): Let me congratulate Ambassador Razali on his election to the office of President of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly and wish him all the best in that challenging post. I would also like to thank the outgoing President, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, for the outstanding manner in which he conducted the work of the previous session.

A year ago, many world leaders gathered here to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and, in particular, to discuss its future prospects. No one questioned its importance as a worldwide forum for dealing with important global problems. Based on the principle of universality, it should be open to all those who are willing and ready to participate in this endeavour.

But as it enters the second half-century of its existence, the United Nations faces increasing, ever more complex and often even conflicting demands. Its response has often been to try to do everything, eventually watering down its energies and drive, thus contributing to a perception of declining efficiency. It should in fact focus only on what it does best: maintaining international peace and security, promoting respect for human rights, providing development assistance and alleviating human suffering.

We therefore believe that a critical stage in its reform should consist of setting out clear-cut priorities for United Nations action. There are areas where the United Nations holds a competitive advantage, where it can act more efficiently than individual States or regional organizations, and where it has proven its ability to achieve more cost-effective and rapid results than other entities.

Reform is no longer a subject for discussion. Action is needed. Significant steps in the right direction have, of course, already been taken. We have noted with satisfaction the gradual downsizing of the Secretariat in the past several years and the adoption of a no-growth budget for the current period. Similar efforts by specialized agencies have furthermore included moves towards their better coordination. We welcome the establishment of an Efficiency Board within the Secretariat.

Though reform is well under way, the current system is still hindered by overlapping mandates and duplication in the work of various United Nations bodies and specialized agencies. Departments within secretariats suffer from insufficient coordination and oversight mechanisms, unclear priorities and bureaucratic procedures. Intense reflection on these matters is taking place in various United Nations bodies. The Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System has discussed rationalizing the General Assembly's methods and organization of its work, streamlining its agenda and reshaping its subsidiary machinery, as well as reforming the structures and functioning of the Secretariat. We hope that some of these ideas will mature enough to be presented as formal recommendations to the General Assembly.

The financial situation of the United Nations continues to be critical, in spite of a reduction in peacekeeping activities. In our view, there are two main causes of this situation: the present method of assessing contributions and arrears.

On the first point, we believe that a new scale of assessments should be developed that would equitably reflect the economic circumstances of individual Member States and their capacity to pay, based primarily on gross national product (GNP) indicators. On the second point, it is essential that Member States fulfil their financial obligations in full, on time and without conditions. Certain incentives and disincentives should be adopted to encourage Member States to honour their financial commitments. These measures, however, should not be applied to Members unable to pay for reasons beyond their control.

The Czech Republic fully associates itself with the European Union's package of financial proposals. I recall also that our share of peacekeeping operations has not been determined yet. We take this issue very seriously and have made certain specific proposals to resolve it.

Security Council reform has attracted extremely wide attention. As I mentioned in 1995, we support an increase in both permanent and non-permanent seats while insisting on safeguarding rapid and effective Council action. Yet the more members it has, the more its effectiveness will be hindered. In our view, therefore, only a modest expansion is feasible. We oppose new categories of membership.

The criteria for new permanent members should include their level of commitment to maintaining peace, to promoting development and to meeting their financial obligations to the United Nations. We believe Germany and Japan are suitable candidates, and support an expanded representation of Africa, Latin America and Asia.

The second aspect of Security Council reform relates to its working methods. Several proposals have been submitted, including the Czech one, on a broader interpretation of Article 31 of the United Nations Charter. The proposals submitted include a number of points acceptable to the overwhelming majority of Member States. We regret that the Working Group on the Security Council has not yet reached consensus on any of them. We believe that issues not requiring amendments to the Charter should be resolved separately from those that would. We will pursue our efforts in this respect and strive for some agreement next year.

Having been elected to the Economic and Social Council and having assumed the post of its Vice-President, we have taken on a fair share of responsibility for its work. We strongly support reform efforts to restructure the Council and to enhance its efficiency and its coordinating role. It should more adequately reflect the new world economic and social situation. We believe that the Council's position within the United Nations system should be strengthened and its procedures streamlined. It should provide policy guidance for development activities and become the supreme steering and coordinating body for all United Nations-based programmes that fall under its purview.

Restructuring its functional commissions is a key aspect of its reform. Regional economic commissions should play a more yisible role. Upgrading development cooperation with Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization is another challenge for the Economic and Social Council. To reduce duplication with the General Assembly, the Council should pass on to the Assembly only those issues that it does not have the power to decide by itself. On the other hand, the General Assembly should strike from its agenda those items that are fully within the Council's authority.

Although the Czech Republic's two-year term on the Security Council expired at the end of 1995, we continue to pay attention to the conflicts and other events that endanger world peace and security.

The Dayton peace process gave a chance to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina and to the other countries involved. The September 1996 elections constituted a milestone on the road to a lasting peace in the Balkans. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe performed its election task in an outstanding manner. We applaud all those who participated in those elections.

On the other hand, we cannot ignore the fact that the election results reconfirmed ethnic divisions in the country. It will not be easy for the parties to overcome this problem. The international community should therefore remain alert and continue in its peaceful engagement by committing the necessary troops and by exerting political pressure on all the parties to keep up the momentum of the Dayton peace process. Local elections, to be held in November, are the next step in this process. It is important that all planned political institutions be formed and start functioning as soon as possible.

Another area of deep interest to us is the Middle East. As a participant in the multilateral talks on peace and economic cooperation in the Middle East and as one of the donor States in the area, we have consistently voiced our full support for the continuation of the peace process based on a just and comprehensive solution of the issues. We do so again today with renewed urgency in view of the recent tragic events in Jerusalem.

Security and stability in the Gulf region are important to the Czech Republic. We support all efforts to solve the tense situation concerning Iraq. Iraq must comply unconditionally with all relevant Security Council resolutions in order for sanctions to be lifted and for Iraq to return to the international community. At the same time, the territorial integrity of Iraq must be preserved. We look forward to a peaceful resolution of the Iraqi issue. For humanitarian reasons we hope that Security

Council resolution 986 (1995) is implemented as soon as conditions permit.

Despite geographical distance, we are deeply concerned by conflicts in African countries, such as Angola, Somalia, Liberia, Rwanda and Burundi. My country supports United Nations efforts to rid these countries of war and suffering, which, besides engendering violence, further widen the gap between developed countries and these often desperately poor countries.

The Czech Republic intends to contribute to international stability and economic development. Domestically, we laid the foundations for this policy by strengthening our democratic institutions and by reforming our economy. Internationally, this effort was endorsed last December when the Czech Republic was admitted to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). For my Government, OECD membership amounts also to a serious commitment to share the knowledge and experience of the Czech people with other countries and to provide development assistance.

Solid domestic results are also a precondition for membership in the European Union and in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). These regional arrangements are vital for Europe's security structure. Through membership in NATO, the Czech Republic intends to contribute to Europe's security and stability. The decision on our membership will be made by NATO members and by our country. Russia's participation in discussions on European security is, of course, critical, and we understand the need for a strategic partnership between NATO and the Russian Federation. These discussions, however, should not precondition the process of NATO enlargement.

Peacekeeping is an important tool in the hands of the Security Council. However, it has its limits, in so far as hostilities often occur within States. These limits are dictated by the principles of impartiality, the non-use of force — except in self-defence — and consent of the parties. Following United Nations experiences in Somalia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and, most recently, in Liberia, unwarranted enthusiasm concerning peacekeepers has evaporated.

The Czech Republic has been actively participating in United Nations peacekeeping. We support the establishment of stand-by arrangements and intend to participate in the system aimed at expanding United Nations capacities to deploy its forces. My country's participation in the Implementation Force (IFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina is our current major effort devoted to peace. The United Nations does not have peace-enforcement instruments of its own, but regional arrangements are often useful in enforcing peace. Our IFOR experience only confirms this. Last year we signed the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, and we anticipate its early ratification. We hope that it will enter into force soon.

The fifth Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) reconfirmed the elimination of nuclear weapons as its ultimate goal. Concluding the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty represents a significant step in this direction, and we intend to sign the Treaty very shortly. It is disturbing however, that the Conference on Disarmament did not reach consensus on this question and that the Treaty was not adopted unanimously. Every effort should be made to achieve universality of NPT membership. Perhaps the most important task is the implementation of Article VI of the Treaty. The role of the Conference on Disarmament in this process is irreplaceable and will take on even more importance, as the Conference is expected to deal with another growing problem that we want to help resolve — the elimination of anti-personnel landmines.

Matters of security have long ceased to be only matters of armies and weapons. The devastating social damage done by drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking threaten the entire international community. Close international cooperation in tackling the drug menace should be our response to this dangerous challenge.

International terrorism is another source of great concern. The international community must stand united to suppress it. It is the responsibility of each State to fight terrorism and to strictly apply and abide by all international instruments in this field. We appeal to States that have not ratified the appropriate conventions to do so without delay and to implement them.

The Czech Government attaches great importance to the promotion of human rights and in particular to United Nations activities in this field. An environment that upholds human rights is our best protection as individuals and as a society. We defend human rights because it is in our own best interest. This year the Czech Republic has been elected to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. As a member of the Commission, we intend to contribute actively to its work and to meet the objectives of the international community in this field.

President Havel is one of the 16 Heads of State or Government who have recently issued a statement on reviving multilateralism. The statement voices deep concern over the lack of progress, both in pace and in scope, of multilateral renewal. Nations must either move forward to reform and strengthen the United Nations system, or we risk facing a weakened solidarity, more unilateralism and perhaps conflict and overt disregard of international law and human values. Multilateral diplomacy goes well beyond the United Nations itself. Regional cooperation is crucial to strengthening global cooperation. Without a stronger United Nations, however, other forms of international cooperation will lose coherence.

The Acting President: I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Yemen, His Excellency Mr. Abdulkarim Al-Eryany.

Mr. Al-Eryany (Yemen) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It is a pleasure for me to warmly congratulate Mr. Razali on his election to the presidency of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. We are sure that his extensive experience and political sophistication will make a significant contribution to the success of its work. I should like also to express my thanks and appreciation to his predecessor for his judicious management of the work of the General Assembly during its last session.

I would like to take this opportunity to express once more my country's appreciation of the role played by the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and of his sincere, invaluable efforts to strengthen the role of the Organization in keeping abreast of international events and developments to the benefit of all humanity and in order to preserve international peace and security. On behalf of Yemen, I would also like to express my country's support for the re-election of Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali for a second term as Secretary-General so he can continue the comprehensive restructuring of the United Nations, which will enable it to play a significant and fundamental role responsive to the demands of the twenty-first century.

As this session is being held, new and dangerous developments are taking place, threatening peace and security in the Middle East. The situation in Jerusalem and other parts of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip has exploded as a result of the aggressive unjustified actions and harsh practices undertaken by the Israeli authorities against the Palestinian people, and their continued attempts to change the character of Holy Al-Quds Al-Sharif. The most recent of these attempts was Israel's opening of a tunnel linking Al-Borac Square and Al-Mujahidin Street near Bab Al-Asbat, threatening the integrity of Al-Haram Al-Sharif and other Islamic monuments. During the last few days, the Israeli army and police force have used various kinds of weapons and live ammunition against unarmed Palestinian protesters. These clashes have caused the death or injury of hundreds of innocent Palestinians.

We strongly condemn and denounce the actions and practices of the Israeli military forces and their repeated acts of aggression against Palestinian officials and citizens in Arab Al-Quds and other Palestinian towns, which have led to the death and injury of hundreds of people. The terrorism and oppression carried out by the Israeli occupying authority constitute a gross violation of human rights, legitimate international resolutions and the Fourth Geneva Convention, which applies to occupied territories. This critical development can only exacerbate the situation and return the region to a cycle of tension and violence. It threatens peace and security not only in the Middle East region but in the whole world.

This year, the Republic of Yemen celebrated the sixth anniversary of its unification, achieved after successfully overcoming all the difficulties and challenges in the way of unity and development. These celebrations coincided with preparations for voter registration for the second parliamentary elections since the reunification of our country, which are to be held in April 1997 reinforcing democracy in our country. Our democratic approach is demonstrated by our political pluralism, and our respect for human rights and freedom of the press, and will enable us to achieve qualitative changes in the economic, social and political life of Yemeni citizens.

Today the Republic of Yemen is enjoying stability, a democratic process and economic reforms, which must enjoy the encouragement and support of the international community since this democratic process will contribute to the strengthening of security and stability at the local and regional levels.

At the same time, our people are in the midst of a difficult and important battle for social and economic development and modernization and for the elimination of backwardness. Some of the most serious problems we face as a developing country are inflation, the increase in the rates of population growth and their effects on the growth rate of the national economy. In order to deal with that, the Government has adopted a programme of economic, financial and administrative reforms in cooperation with the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development with the aim of correcting economic, financial and structural imbalances. This has been done to achieve balance and stability in the economy as a whole and to activate the role of the private sector on the basis of a market economy and free competition, while taking into account the importance of improving basic essential social services, building a modern State and improving the standard of living of citizens.

Efforts by the Yemeni Government to implement this programme have yielded improvements and have had notable success, especially in preventing the collapse of the local currency, reducing the rate of inflation and achieving a positive growth rate. However, it has proved difficult to alleviate suffering in the social sphere. These difficulties have been compounded by the disastrous floods which plagued Yemen last June, causing extensive, grave losses of life and property. These affected some parts of the infrastructure and harmed many people. Agricultural land was eroded and livestock was destroyed. Houses, roads, bridges, health centres, sources of drinking water and schools in many areas of the Republic of Yemen were all destroyed. These losses and damages were a major disaster and economic setback for Yemen.

I would like to take this opportunity to renew my call for international and humanitarian organizations and fraternal and friendly Governments to provide help and support to overcome the disastrous effects of the floods. I would also like to thank all those organizations and Governments that have responded and offered support for and solidarity with the people of Yemen in their ordeal.

The Republic of Yemen, in the framework of its political orientation, is pursuing a foreign policy based on mutual respect and the common interests of States. It therefore stresses the importance of maintaining security, stability and cooperation among all States in the region. In this regard, demarcation of the border between our country and the fraternal Sultanate of Oman has been definitively concluded through a dialogue based upon mutual interests, equitable treatment and respect for the rights of both countries. This achievement represents a significant positive step that will serve security and stability in the region and deepen trust between the two countries. Similarly, our country is working with the same sincerity and credibility to settle the issue of the border with the fraternal Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the basis of mutual interests and in the light of the Taif Agreement and the contents of the memorandum of understanding signed by the two countries on 26 February 1995 in the Holy City of Mecca.

Pursuant to this, joint committees have been formed to discuss the border issue, its demarcation, the development of all aspects of cultural, trade and economic relations and the strengthening of cooperation between the two fraternal countries.

Moreover, a security agreement was signed on 27 July 1996 that emphasized the concerns of both countries for their joint security and to combat terrorism, exchange security information and strengthen cooperation between their institutions, thus giving concrete form to the spirit of the 1934 Taif Treaty and the memorandum of understanding signed on 26 February 1995. An agreement on technical, investment, trade and economic cooperation was also signed.

The Republic of Yemen has shown a sincere desire and strong political will and has made continuous efforts to address the matter of the Eritrean occupation in mid-December 1995 of the Yemeni island of Hanish al-Kabir in the Red Sea. While negotiations were taking place between the two countries aimed at reaching a peaceful settlement that would respect legal, historical and geographical rights, our country did not opt for the use of force. From the very first day, we stressed the necessity of using peaceful means, dialogue through mediators and international arbitration in order to spare the two neighbouring peoples the scourges of war and conflict, in keeping with its belief in the principles and purposes of the United Nations and its commitment to the provisions of the Charter. Accordingly, an agreement of principles between Yemen and Eritrea was officially signed in Paris on 21 May 1996. This was the fruit of French, Egyptian and Ethiopian mediation efforts and of the support of our Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali. This agreement was a sound basis on which to settle peacefully the dispute between the two countries regarding issues of territorial sovereignty and maritime borders. On this basis, discussions have begun on special arbitration measures and the mechanism to be used with a view to starting the process as soon as possible. It is unfortunate that, despite all these procedures, Eritrea took new action on the island of Hanish af-Saghir on 10 August 1996. This act violated the agreement of principles and created an atmosphere of tension and conflict in the region, threatening stability, security and the safety of international shipping in the region.

Now that Eritrea has withdrawn its forces from the island of Hanish af-Saghir and the crisis has passed, we would like to express our thanks and appreciation for the role played and efforts made by France and its special envoy, and the positions of the Secretary-General and the President and members of the Security Council, and to all those fraternal and friendly States that declared their support for the principles agreed upon for resolving the conflict peacefully through arbitration. Finally, my country would like to stress that a peaceful settlement is the proper way to improve relations between Yemen and Eritrea and to promote the trust necessary to creating an atmosphere conducive to the development of relations between the two countries and the peoples of Yemen and Eritrea.

The civil war in Somalia has gone beyond the bounds of reason and, as our country is a neighbour of fraternal Somalia, we have found ourselves shouldering the burden of receiving and housing tens of thousands of refugees. We have also cooperated with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and non-governmental organizations in sheltering and feeding the Somali refugees, although this is a heavy burden on our country and compounds its existing economic and social ills.

We are deeply disturbed by the continuing fragmentation, fighting and uncertainty in Somalia. The Republic of Yemen considers that the responsibility for solving the refugee problem, which is a social and economic burden of significant proportions, and the solution of the Somali problem lie with the Somalis themselves. On that basis, we urge the Somali leadership once again to demonstrate greater political will and a genuine desire to reach a final settlement for peace and stability in their country and to engage in dialogue in order to save their people, rebuild their country and give the refugees the opportunity to return to their homes and resettle. In order to facilitate this, Yemen has received a number of Somali leaders and made every effort to assist the Somalis themselves to reach a national accord acceptable to all. We hope these efforts will be successful. The achievement of national reconciliation in Somalia and the improvement of security and stability in that country and the entire Horn of Africa are at the forefront of our concerns, embodying our historical and strategic relationships, which are inextricably intertwined with all the States of the region.

In view of the Republic of Yemen's positive support for the peace process in the Middle East, which began with the Madrid Conference in October 1991, guaranteeing a just and comprehensive peace on the basis of legitimate international resolutions, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), and subsequent agreements and protocols in this regard, and on the basis of the principle of land for peace and guarantees of complete Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories, we once again emphasize the necessity for a lasting, just and comprehensive peace as the basis for security, stability and prosperity in the region. Only this can ensure that the root causes of violence and extremism will be destroyed and that the values of tolerance, peaceful coexistence and civilized cooperation among peoples will be promoted.

Accordingly, we would like to express our concern about the resumption of the Israeli policy of settlement on Palestinian land, especially around the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif. The Israelis are establishing settlements, destroying Palestinian houses, building bypass roads for Israeli settlers, continuing the blockade of Palestinian lands and refusing to redeploy Israeli forces out of Hebron. These Israeli practices constitute blatant violations of agreements and pledges made between Israel and the Palestinian Authority and can only exacerbate tensions and return the peace process to its starting point, possibly even derailing the entire process.

We therefore stress the importance of making rapid progress towards a final settlement leading to restoration of the Palestinians' legitimate rights, particularly the rights to self-determination and to establish an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with relevant international resolutions and the basic principles underlying the Madrid Conference. Negotiations on the basis of those principles and with all parties respecting their commitments should be conducted on all tracks.

The peace process is currently facing risks and challenges that are preventing it from achieving its aims. Israel is deliberately dragging its feet and is persistent in its procrastination over negotiations with the Syrian Arab Republic on the basis of the agreements reached by both parties under the previous Israeli Government. Among the most important of these was the obligation to withdraw fully from the occupied Syrian Golan and southern Lebanon in accordance with relevant international resolutions and the principle of "land for peace". We stress the need for Israel to respect the sovereignty and independence of fraternal Lebanon, release Lebanese prisoners and detainees from Israeli concentration camps and acknowledge its responsibility to compensate Lebanon for the losses it has sustained as a result of the continuing Israeli acts of aggression against its land and people.

A just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East, together with security and stability in the region, can be achieved only if every State of the region fulfils its obligations equally and through the establishment of a nuclear-, biological- and chemical-weapon-free zone in the region. Israel must ratify the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and submit its nuclear installations to the international inspection regime as a step towards establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and freeing the area from the threat of all weapons of mass destruction. In this context, we would like to express our satisfaction at the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty at the beginning of this session. Yemen will sign the Treaty today.

While Yemen stresses the importance of Iraq's total compliance with resolutions of the international community and its continuing cooperation with the United Nations, we would also stress the need to preserve the unity, territorial sovereignty and integrity of Iraq. We also express our great concern about and condemnation of any action in this regard affecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq and appeal for the alleviation of the suffering of the Iraqi people. We therefore welcome the memorandum of understanding signed in May 1996 between Iraq and the United Nations on the implementation of Security Council resolution 986 (1995), providing for the sale of petroleum for the purchase of food as a first step towards alleviating the terrible suffering of the fraternal Iraqi people.

We call upon the international community and the Security Council to pursue the lifting of the air blockade and other measures imposed on the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya pursuant to Security Council resolutions and to respond to the resolutions and proposals of regional organizations. The most recent of these was the initiative put forward at the emergency Arab summit held in Cairo from 21 to 23 June 1996 in order to resolve the conflict between the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and the three countries concerned.

The Republic of Yemen renews its call to the fraternal countries of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Arab Emirates to continue a direct dialogue aimed at reaching a peaceful settlement of the issue of the three islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of good neighbourliness and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States in the region, and to resort to international arbitration in a manner that will satisfy both parties.

Our country also emphasizes its solidarity with fraternal Bahrain and expresses its complete support for the measures it has taken to ensure its security and stability.

The tragic situation of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina has preoccupied the Yemeni people. The Republic of Yemen therefore welcomes the Agreements that the parties involved in the conflict reached last November in Dayton and Paris in order to bring peace to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to express its satisfaction with the contents of the Agreements, which stressed the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. On this occasion, we wish to register our appreciation of the efforts made by the United States of America and the States of the European Union to bring about these Agreements. We call upon the international community to provide every possible support to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina and their plans for the development and reconstruction of their country. We would also stress the need for every party to surrender all war criminals to the International Tribunal in The Hague so that they may be brought to account for their heinous crimes against humanity in violation of international law, human rights and international agreements.

The Republic of Yemen, in view of its geographical position on the Indian Ocean, places particular importance on any effort made to strengthen cooperation between the Ocean's littoral States. Accordingly, our country took part in the most recent meeting, held in Mauritius, to complete the drafting of the constitution and platform of action for the planned Indian Ocean rim initiative.

We take this opportunity to express our satisfaction with the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean to implement the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace, free of nuclear weapons. We call upon the permanent members of the Security Council and maritime users of the Indian Ocean to participate in the work of the Committee in order to strengthen security, peace, stability and cooperation in the region in accordance with relevant General Assembly resolutions.

In conclusion, I should like to express our hope that the work of this session will enjoy every success, strengthening the United Nations and its bodies and enabling them to achieve their goals and the ideals embodied in the Charter in a manner appropriate to the spirit of the age and international changes.

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, His Excellency Mr. Roberto Robaina González.

Mr. Robaina González (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): A year ago, from this same rostrum, I began my statement by reading some 10 hair-raising news items of the moment from the international press, on bellicose conflicts, violence and death in the cities and deadly epidemics claiming new victims. Intending to do this again today, I found that the situation remains the same, or is perhaps even worse. Unfortunately, the world wasted another 12 months without doing anything to stop such catastrophic events.

As if it were necessary to illustrate this with specific facts, even as we gathered here we once again witnessed the bloodshed of the heroic Palestinian people. First and foremost, I denounce the new Israeli aggression and the policy of hegemony that defends these acts, and I express support for our Palestinian brothers in their struggle for their legitimate right to finally have an independent state, with Jerusalem its capital.

Also about a year ago, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, the country of the President of the General Assembly, very rightly stated that the United Nations should support the collective needs of peoples and nations in order to serve humanity as a whole, and that it was therefore necessary to correct the trend of making them an instrument of the wealthy and the powerful. Today it must be recognized that we are meeting again without having removed that danger.

Hence, in expressing my Government's satisfaction at having President Razali lead us in our work, I cannot but express confidence that his diplomatic professionalism, his personal achievements and his long and proven experience in the work of this Organization will give him strength in leading us in a remarkably difficult and complex session of the General Assembly.

Far from being more democratic and universal, the Organization in which we come together today is tending to tighten more and more the exclusive circle of those who govern it. The just demands heard from this rostrum are now sounding the alarm at the march of ideas being promoted mainly in our host country.

Just a few weeks ago, the Chairman of the United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee issued an ultimatum for the United Nations to carry out reforms in accordance with the prescriptions of that country or else face the consequences. His articles in renowned publications question precisely the principles on which this institution is founded, particularly the principle of sovereign equality of States.

For this influential United States politician and those who identify themselves with his primitive views, there is only one argument: some States deserve more privileges than others. In this way they try to make a dead letter of the principle of sovereign equality of States, the cornerstone of the Charter adopted over 50 years ago in San Francisco.

But there is more: the Government of the United States of America, which owes the United Nations the shameful amount of over $1.5 billion, assumes, with no embarrassment whatsoever, the right to determine unilaterally who can or cannot be the Secretary-General of the United Nations and to declare how an Organization deliberately deprived of the resources required for the fulfilment of its functions should or should not be managed.

Eighty per cent of the work of the United Nations system is devoted to assisting the developing countries and to strengthening their ability to help themselves. This endeavour includes the aspiration to receive fair treatment in international economic relations; to try to save children from starvation and disease; to promote emergency assistance to refugees and disaster victims; to attempt to combat crime, drug addiction and disease; to promote education and the development of human resources; and to tackle the enormous task of halting or slowing the progressive ecological deterioration of our planet.

These are precisely the functions that the notorious United States Senator is trying to abolish, and it is because of the existence of those programmes that the managerial approach of the Secretary-General is so fiercely attacked.

That position of the planet's most powerful country is not aimed against one person; rather, using the question of the Organization's efficiency as a pretext, it stands against the United Nations mandate to attend to the needs of the great majority of mankind. It is a new and gross attempt to impose on the community of nations the will of a single State in the management of the multilateral forum of cooperation that should be the most representative and democratic one in the world.

We should ask ourselves if we, the members of this Assembly, can passively accept the threat posed by this unilateral imposition. It is fitting to recall what Harry Truman said of the Charter of the United Nations at the San Francisco Conference in 1945:

> "If we fail to use it, we shall betray all those who have died in order that we might meet here in freedom and safety to create it.
>
> "If we seek to use it selfishly — for the advantage of any one nation or any small group of nations — we shall be equally guilty of that betrayal." *(Documents of the United Nations Conference on International Organization, San Francisco, 1945, vol. 1, p. 687)*

Further comment is unnecessary; subsequent history has been quite eloquent enough. But the most dangerous thing, as has often been said, is that the United Nations is merely the reflection of the world in which we live. This domineering unilateralism shows up even more crudely in the daily conduct of international relations. In a world in which relations of respect, good-neighbourliness and cooperation among the peoples and Governments should be fostered every day, the fact is that one Power, resting on its unquestionable economic, military and technological might, seeks to impose rules and norms of conduct on the rest of the world, thus undermining the sovereign rights of each and every one of our nations.

What political, legal or moral reason underlies and legitimizes the missile attack against the Republic of Iraq by the United States Armed Forces just a few days ago? What principles or claims can be used to cover up the unilateral and unjustified use of force? The Security Council did not yield to that unilateral aggression, but it has not been able to formulate a clear position on the matter because of its well-known structural and procedural deficiencies and also because of the tolerance and impunity with which the international community has recently accepted the haughty arrogance of a Government that assumes the right to punish sovereign nations at its whim under spurious pretexts.

There is no justification for trampling the territorial integrity of a full-fledged Member of this Organization, and even less for that action to be taken by a single Government, nor for threatening the peace and security of a region inhabited by tens of millions of persons. And all this has taken place while the political experts of the aggressor country could not agree on which was its strongest motivation: the wretched oil interests or the frenzy of the ongoing carnival-like electoral campaign in the United States.

It is incredible that world politics can be paralysed, that foreign ministries postpone decisions and that Governments advance or delay responses to national or international dilemmas, thinking only of their repercussions in that North American simulacrum of democracy. Anything can happen, and no country, legal precept or moral principle seems to be safe. Fortunately, the super-elections are held only every four years, because if they took place annually, like the sessions of the General Assembly, living on this planet would be true madness.

The Helms-Burton Act, aimed against everyone's sovereignty and against Cuba, a sovereign State, was conceived as an additional effort to subdue our people through hunger and poverty. It is an eloquent example of the absurd will to impose imperial designs on sovereign and independent countries in the conduct of their own international and trade relations. For that reason, it has been unanimously rejected by the international community. That law, ignoring the General Assembly resolutions on the issue, is intended to strengthen further the blockade against our country.

For a century — and especially during the last 37 years — the Cuban people have had to face the hegemonic vocation of successive United States Governments. The extraterritorial ambitions of our neighbour, its attempts to question the sovereign decisions of another State and its violation of the universally recognized principles of international trade are realities with which Cuba has been familiar for a long time.

When we denounced the crime that was about to take place, it was neither to frighten nor to play with anyone. The Helms-Burton Act, the most sophisticated bungle of the economic war against Cuba, attacks many countries and compels them to experience in their own sovereignty what we Cubans have been facing for a long time. The world can now better understand what so many years of continuous offences and extraterritorial acts have meant for my homeland.

Another instance of unipolarity and of the attempt to dictate the conduct of sovereign States is the law known as D'Amato-Kennedy, which has also received universal repudiation. It repeats the philosophy of imposition and ratifies the tendency to apply United States law beyond its borders. The argument for this is the alleged war against terrorism, when, in fact, the United States was the main promoter of terrorism in its dirty wars in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Angola and South Africa, against the Palestinian patriots and in many other countries — the United States has always supported the bloodiest regimes that have ever existed in this world.

There are just causes and unjust causes. No one will ever have the right to kill innocent people, regardless of the objectives being pursued. This does not negate any people's right to use weapons against its oppressors: to fight cleanly, yes; to kill innocents, never. A State cannot be allowed to arrogate to itself the right to accuse, condemn and sanction other nations and to impose by force an illegitimate crusade that often serves to disguise the real terrorists.

Cuba — which has been the victim of many terrorist actions and has for many years faced repeated attempts on the lives of its political leaders, as well as sabotage, biological warfare, the destruction of a passenger plane in flight and the hijacking of aircraft, and which suffers even today from armed infiltrations and which has been, above all, the victim of brutal economic terrorism — expects a joint and conscious effort from the international community to address the terrorism that has its origins in Langley, Virginia — that is to say, at the Central Intelligence Agency — and later spreads to many countries of the world.

Drug trafficking, in our opinion, should be dealt with in the same manner. The drug issue should not be transformed into an instrument of pressure against underdeveloped countries, many of which do not have sufficient resources to tackle this scourge. This problem has taken on global dimensions and can be confronted only by sharing responsibilities and using the mechanisms offered by the United Nations.

The policy of conferring arbitrary certifications is unacceptable, and even more so is its use as a pretext to interfere in the internal affairs of sovereign nations. The country whose enormous rates of consumption have become the main market for and driving force behind this criminal industry, the country in whose territory the greatest profits of this business are generated, does not have the moral authority to assign responsibility to or demand it from others. What would happen if the world, truly concerned by the scourge of drugs, were to decertify unanimously the greatest drug consumer? To put it another way, people who live in glass houses should not throw stones, and he who has a beam in his eye should not be so concerned about the mote in another's.

No one can disregard the immense influence of the United States in the so-called post-cold-war period, but mankind would be making a mistake if it were to look with indifference upon the currents of thought within that country that entertain the possibility of governing the rest of the world or of acting with utter disregard for the rights and interests of other peoples. We are facing a King Kong escaped from his cage, destroying and crushing everything around him, aimlessly and out of control.

We are not trying to convince this forum that the United States is the source of all the evils of the planet, but it would be a mistake to ignore reality and not to take timely preventive actions — preferably collective ones — to admonish to sanity the persons charged with guiding that country politically, to do so with a minimum of responsibility and to understand that the power of any nation, important as it might be, has its limits.

The world is more plagued by uncertainty today than when the new world order was demagogically proclaimed. On the threshold of the new millennium, the numbers of armed conflicts between States, ethnic groups and religions have increased. What we see everywhere is not a new order but, rather, a disquieting world in perfect disorder. The social and economic consequences of these conflicts have no parallel in contemporary history, but we cannot simply pretend that military imposition, coercion and sanctions are a universal panacea that can solve the numerous humanitarian problems of the world.

Inequalities, rampant underdevelopment, globalization and the interdependence that is increasingly turning into the worst form of dependency should disappear so that these new conflicts may, in turn, be eradicated for ever from this world, which, based on injustice, is becoming increasingly ungovernable.

Economic models based on neoliberal philosophy have spread throughout much of the third world with the support of the international financial institutions. Although these models have generated deceptive, apparently attractive macroeconomic indicators, in practice they go hand in hand with an increase in poverty, marginalization, environmental degradation, disease, ignorance, social conflict, a loss of national resources and sovereignty — in short, with the most brutal and increasingly irreversible underdevelopment.

This neoliberal school of thought is based on artificial paradigms that should be unmasked. It is false that the market, with its magical invisible hand, is the definitive solution for the immense disruptions affecting the international economy and that it is the miraculous remedy that would liberate many countries, home to the vast majority of the earth's population, from underdevelopment and poverty.

It is false that absolute privatization, which can benefit only the few, brings well-being to the legions of the poor and the wretched living in the third world.

It is false that geography determines the economic power of peoples.

It is false that genetics determines which human beings are born to be poor and wretched and which are born under the shining star of wealth and extravagance.

It is false that the State or Government is the main source of corruption and inefficiency and should renounce responsibility for welfare, health and education, leaving these obligations mainly in private hands whose motivations will always be limited and discriminatory and are frequently based on greed.

It is false that the poor, the oppressed and the exploited should have a lesser role in ultra-modern societies.

It is false that social justice and equity always have to be sacrificed for the sake of commercial efficiency.

It is false that the total removal of protection for national industries in the developing countries will yield higher productivity, wealth, employment and well-being for their peoples.

It is false that the sovereignty of nations is an outmoded principle of international coexistence and that Governments and countries are ready to abandon it because of the strength of transnational capital and the social-political models exported by the North.

Finally, it is false that the neoliberal models that have been sold to us will raise the indicators or levels of human development set as objectives by the United Nations.

One should check the statistics and compare annual reports, not just between one country and another, but also between indicators for the third world from one year to the next in areas such as infant mortality, poverty, education, life expectancy, access to drinking water, human settlements, schooling for children, and doctors per number of inhabitants.

All these falsities, many of them recorded in United Nations documents, hide the bankruptcy of development prospects for most of the poor countries, which is already threatening world stability and aggravating the ecological deterioration we all recognized several years ago at the historic Rio Conference. The poor are already falling into the immense and ever wider chasm separating them from the rich, who continue to grow disproportionately and irresponsibly without realizing that sooner or later their own weight will also drag them down into the same pit.

And, in this aberrant context, what are we to say about the arms race? The rivalry between the big Powers and the arms race have supposedly disappeared. Why, then, in spite of the adoption of international instruments supposedly to that end, is there such resistance to real nuclear disarmament that will free humanity for ever from that scourge? Who is responsible for the fact that the recently adopted Treaty to ban all nuclear tests does not cover simulated laboratory tests in which new lethal weapons will be perfected by those who monopolize them, or any commitment to the destruction of arsenals? Unless we discover life in other galaxies, where will the enemies endangering the big Powers come from?

Fifty-one years after the creation of the United Nations, instead of seeing wealth and development extend from the North to the South, we see the growing threat of underdevelopment moving inexorably from the South to the North.

It is said that hunger and poverty are on the rise. In fact, what has also happened is that wealth is more and more concentrated, increasingly exclusive and limited, while walls higher than the one that fell in Berlin are being built.

Let us be frank: the North is not as rich as it seems, nor is the South as poor as they want to make it. Almost all the wealth of the North comes from the wealth and resources of the South. And all the hunger and poverty of the South is nothing other than the legacy of over 500 years of exploitation and disregard for our human rights.

If we cannot reverse this situation collectively, by sharing the burden and improving living conditions in the developing countries, no one will be able to stop the waves of migrants attracted by the siren's song of wealthy and opulent societies.

The United Nations has a vast arsenal of documents, resolutions and initiatives conceived for those purposes but never implemented. Soon it will be too late. Today we can still act.

While all this is happening, the blockade of Cuba continues. With the Helms-Burton Act, it has become even clearer that it is not just an embargo, because in the last few months, the United States, through its words and deeds, has sent the world sure signals that what is really being waged against my country is a long and dirty economic war for total control over our sovereignty and our markets.

The criminal blockade, as part of its frightening network of measures created over 35 years, has now a Draconian law that publicly calls for a world crusade to change forcibly the Cuban constitutional order and undo a revolution defended by our people at the cost of their lives.

What have we come to when United States diplomats, on the ugliest mission since the Viet Nam war, tell the world that they are granting it a few months' sovereignty before trampling upon it if the world does not join their war on Cuba?

I am fulfilling the mandate bestowed on me by the free people of Cuba to proclaim in front of the international community of nations that we will persevere in our efforts to defend our social, political and economic actions aimed at ensuring equality, justice and well-being for all Cubans.

Our own experience is the best contribution we can make as a nation towards meeting the enormous challenges facing humanity, as has been shown by Cuba's economic, political and social achievements in the last year. A country that has overcome a serious economic crisis, that maintains its governability, that grows and develops with the solidarity of many, that expands its relations throughout the world and that grows stronger — this is a country with a future.

The socialism we have chosen for our homeland is our only emancipatory, moral and ethical alternative, with roots firmly planted in the history of our nation. It is a path that we chose in freedom and sovereignty, a path that we shall not renounce and that no one imposed on us.

We wish to live in harmony with all the countries of the world, including the United States. Cuba wants and needs peace. But let us be clear: Cuba is not and never will be willing to sacrifice, under pressure from anyone or in exchange for anything, the independence, sovereignty and self-determination that it has achieved and defended at such a high price.

Today, in that blue Caribbean that shelters us, we Cubans will continue with our heads held high, with our feet on the ground and with our eyes on the future. Thus do we defend our choice: to live in the free and sovereign homeland dreamed of by our founding fathers and achieved by our fathers and grandfathers.

Let there be no doubt. We shall overcome.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.

United Nations A/51/PV.15

General Assembly

Fifty-first Session

Official Records

15th plenary meeting

Monday, 30 September 1996, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail . . . . (Malaysia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Nsanze (Burundi), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The Acting President: The first speaker is the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Albania, His Excellency Mr. Tritan Shehu, on whom I now call.

Mr. Shehu (Albania) (*interpretation from French*): Let me begin by expressing my warmest congratulations to Mr. Razali Ismail on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly as well as my best wishes for his success. I am pleased also to take this occasion to convey my sincere appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral for the excellent manner in which he guided the proceedings of the Assembly during the previous session. We wish also to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his invaluable contribution and his tireless efforts in effectively steering the Organization.

Despite many difficulties and financial problems, the United Nations is striving to play its irreplaceable role in the service of peace and security through peacekeeping operations and the promotion of international cooperation. The United Nations Blue Helmets have already become symbols of hope in the major areas of conflict throughout the world. The Albanian Government sincerely hopes that a lasting peace will be established in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Burundi, Liberia, and everywhere else.

The United Nations is undergoing the most severe financial crisis in its history. This year alone, the Organization ran out of money in its regular budget three times and was therefore forced to borrow funds from its peacekeeping operations budget. The tasks of today and the challenges of tomorrow require a general reform of the entire United Nations system. Albania has actively participated in the debate on the preparatory process to reform the Security Council within the framework of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council. Albania is in favour of increasing the size of the Council by two permanent seats: Germany and Japan. We also believe that options should be considered that relate to a broader representation of Member States, in order to make the Council more efficient and better able to fulfil its mandate.

Revitalization of the Economic and Social Council must be part of the reform process. We all firmly believe that as long as wide economic gaps exist between North and South, and East and West, several peoples and countries will face key problems related to their survival, and risks of tension, conflicts and regional hostility will prevail. For this reason, reform of the Security Council will not aid the cause of global peace and stability if it is

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not accompanied by an equally effective reform of the Economic and Social Council.

After a long 50 years of communist rule, Albania has now been a democracy for five years. During this period of democratic reform, it has had to face innumerable major problems, including its communist heritage, with its associated spirit of class struggle; and its extreme poverty and strict isolation. The country's transition was rendered yet more difficult by the situation in the region, which was weighted down by the crisis in the former Yugoslavia and the related application of the sanctions regime for several years. Nonetheless, Albania has been able to evolve from a one-party to a multiple-party system; from repression to the establishment of a State based on the rule of law and on respect for human rights and minorities; from a highly centralized and depressed economy to a growing, free-market economy; and from isolationism to openness to Euro-Atlantic integration.

Albania's gross domestic product has increased annually, from 11 per cent in 1992 to 15 per cent in 1996. Inflation fell 400 per cent in 1992 and now stands at 7.5 per cent in 1996. Our national currency's exchange rate has gained some stability, and our foreign debt has been paid. Although five years ago the economy was totally centralized, privatization is now proceeding rapidly in all the major economic sectors; at present 75 per cent of overall production comes from the private sector. The unemployment rate has dropped from 39 per cent in 1992 to 12 per cent in 1996. Within four years, Albania was able to completely liberalize prices.

Clearly, transforming a centralized economy into a market economy is difficult and sometimes painful, especially for certain economic sectors and for certain segments of the population. I should like to take this opportunity to again sincerely thank the European Union, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the International Monetary Fund and a number of United Nations specialized agencies for the valuable assistance they have provided to my country during this period of transition. We are confident that these institutions will continue to help Albania.

Over the past four years, Albania's prestige in the international arena has increased considerably, giving proof of its priority Euro-Atlantic orientation. Albania is already a member of the Council of Europe and an active participant in the Partnership for Peace, and is working for its full integration into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union. In this regard Albania highly appreciates the support of the member States of the European Union and is convinced that the time has come to accelerate the process of Albania's integration. We also welcome the current progress being made in solidifying our relations with the United States, which the Albanians consider to be the champion of democracy and freedom. We are confident that these relations, which are of great importance to Albania, will continue to develop.

Albania's regional policy is based on a desire to promote peace and stability in the Balkans. Given the geo-strategic position of Albania, the deteriorating situation of those Albanians living in exile in other Balkan countries, and the prolonged crisis in the former Yugoslavia, the Albanian Government's significant contribution to regional peace and stability demonstrates its willingness to establish regional cooperation in line with Euro-Atlantic trends. Determined to continue this policy and to increase its contribution, Albania hosted the first Conference of South-Balkans Defence Ministers, which served as a first step leading to the Conference of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, held in Sofia some months later. As part of this contribution, my country has just established a peacekeeping unit, now serving in Zadar, Croatia within the framework of the Implementation Force (IFOR).

The Albanian Government continues to believe that the question of the Balkans requires greater attention by the international community and by the United Nations in particular. The bitter history of the region and the prolonged conflict of recent years have proved clearly that the threat of war always looms large in countries where ultra-nationalism and chauvinism hold sway. We all are aware of the importance of the Dayton Agreement in resolving the conflict in the Balkans. We have always stressed the importance of identifying the major cause of that conflict: Serb ultra-nationalism.

While making a serious effort to assist in the implementation of the Dayton Agreement, the Government of the Republic of Albania wishes once again to draw the attention of the United Nations to the serious problem of Kosovo. In the 1980s, Kosovo — more than 90 per cent of whose population consists of Albanians who have lived on their own territory for thousands of years — was the first to speak of the danger that Serb ultra-nationalism posed to the territories of the former Yugoslavia. National chauvinism; ethnic intolerance; racial, economic and religious discrimination; "ethnic cleansing"; and acts of violence and repression against an entire population — characteristic features of Serb policy — were demonstrated for the first time in Kosovo. In fact, the crisis in the former Yugoslavia began in Kosovo, though at that time the international community paid scant attention to what the Albanians were saying. It was not until the crisis became a bloody conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina that proper attention was paid.

The Kosovo issue must be duly examined and treated in the spirit of the Dayton Agreement. It is now considered one of the serious international issues that must be resolved, and it has been the subject of several documents and decisions of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and of the United Nations. However, the situation in Kosovo is still tense and volatile. The fact that up to now an armed conflict between the Albanians living in Kosovo and the Serbs has been avoided — or rather, resisted — is primarily the result of the peaceful policy pursued by the legitimate political representatives of the people of Kosovo, and of the foreign policy of the Albanian Government.

We believe that Kosovo deserves a status that reflects the political will of its people as well as the international instruments relating to the right of peoples to self-determination. The agreement on education in Kosovo, recently reached by representatives of Kosovo and Belgrade, is a promising step towards further efforts fully to guarantee the Kosovo Albanians basic freedoms and human and national rights. The Government of the Republic of Albania believes that through constructive dialogue, in the presence of a credible international third party, a solution to this acute problem can be found.

We thank the General Assembly for its consideration of the situation in Kosovo, particularly through its resolutions 49/204 of 23 December 1994 and 50/190 of 22 December 1995. We would like to take this opportunity to appeal once again to the international community to continue its efforts until this issue is definitively resolved.

Albania's foreign policy is characterized by efforts to establish good relations with its neighbours. Albania has always been in favour of peace, stability, and economic and cultural cooperation with its neighbouring countries. Albania and Greece have been able to establish good relations, which are expanding and strengthening. The Government of the Republic of Albania and the Albanian people are grateful to the Government and the people of Greece for having supported us during our difficult period of transition. The current positive developments in Albanian-Greek relations show, to our great pleasure, that in bilateral relations all problems can be solved satisfactorily and within a reasonable time-frame if there is political good will and a serious commitment by both sides. The friendly relations between our two countries are concrete testimony of the achievements of both the Greek and the Albanian Governments. Good relations between two neighbouring countries such as Albania and Greece show that the existence of national minorities in neighbouring countries can serve as a bridge of friendship and become a connective link between countries. The recognition and equal treatment of national minorities, coupled with respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of each State, are essential elements in such relations.

The Albanian Government has taken steps to show its interest in establishing mutually beneficial relations with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Albania was among the first countries to officially recognize that State, while at the same time assuring it of our readiness to work with it to establish stronger relations in all fields, independently of the problems relating to the situation and the position of those Albanians living in that State. My country believes that the normalization and improvement of relations with Serbia and Montenegro depends on Belgrade taking certain steps, such as respecting the Dayton Agreement, taking concrete measures to put an end to the violence against and the suppression of the rights of the Albanians in Kosovo, and making a serious commitment to a peaceful solution to the Kosovo question.

Albania attaches particular importance to its relations with its western neighbour, Italy. This ancient relationship has lasted as long as our peoples have lived in the Mediterranean. In the framework of the European Union, Italy has been one of the main donors to Albania. We are very grateful to the Italian Government and people for the tremendous assistance they have given our country during this difficult period of transition, and for the spirit of good will that has always prevailed in our relations. We believe these things provide a solid basis for further positive developments in the future.

Before concluding my address before the Assembly, allow me to assure members, on behalf of the Albanian Government, of our continued support for the activities of the United Nations. We will continue to contribute to the strengthening of the Organization and of its irreplaceable role in the service of peace, security, progress and democracy throughout the world. My small country, Albania, will always be committed to contribute actively to all the work of the Organization.

The Acting President: I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Her Excellency Ms. Tansu Çiller.

Ms. Çiller (Turkey): I should like to congratulate warmly Mr. Razali on his election to the high office of President of the General Assembly. I am confident that under his wise and able guidance our deliberations will be most successful. I should also like to thank His Excellency Mr. Do Amaral for his most valuable contribution to the work of the previous session of the General Assembly.

We have just left behind 50 years in the life of this universal Organization, which was founded with the ideal of serving and guiding humankind in its common quest to make the world a better place to live. The commemoration last year of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations marked an important milestone in our journey. Yet we find that our common pursuit of a new and more promising order of international relations is far from its goal. The new expectations and hopes that the end of the cold-war era instilled in us all have, unfortunately, been short-lived. Indeed, such dark forces as extreme ethnic nationalism, aggression, hegemonistic tendencies, intolerance, racism, xenophobia and terrorism have been unleashed to wreak havoc on a global scale. At the same time, economic, social and environmental problems, as well as risks in the military security realm, have assumed global proportions.

No country can claim to be immune from any of the problems we are facing today, which need common solutions. In fact, there is an emerging consensus that more than ever, our common problems require global solutions, which must be formulated in a spirit of solidarity and cooperation. This spirit can find concrete expression only within this Organization, which continues to be the only global forum for collective cooperation and effective international action. Therefore, it is our duty to generations to come to refashion this institution so as to further strengthen it and equip it with the means to meet the challenge of the new era that begins with the twenty-first century.

As we embark on the second half-century of our Organization, it is high time that the international community reassess the ways and means by which it can give a new impetus fo the efforts aimed at building a better and more secure future for all humankind. Substantial work to this end has already been carried out within the United Nations system. In particular, the series of major conferences on basic issues of common concern laid the groundwork for future action. The chain of these conferences, which began with the 1990 World Summit for Children and ended with the Conference on Human Settlements in Istanbul this past June, has covered virtually every aspect of human interest. The declarations and programmes of action they adopted will serve as our road map in our efforts to achieve their final objectives.

It was a distinct privilege for Turkey to host, in Istanbul this year, the last major international conference of the century, Habitat II. That conference played an instrumental role in creating a greater awareness that adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements in a rapidly urbanizing and globalizing world are the common challenges before us. The Istanbul Declaration and the Habitat Agenda will be our guiding instruments to meet these challenges. We attach great importance to the follow-up of that successful conference.

Although criticized at times for its limitations, the United Nations has nevertheless played a crucial role in the search for global solutions to the problems encountered in every field of human endeavour. Yet the challenges that it will face in the twenty-first century will probably be far greater and more formidable than ever before, and the United Nations, therefore, has to promptly adapt to changing times. For this reason, we support the ongoing reform process within the United Nations. In this respect, streamlining, rationalizing, revitalizing and restructuring the United Nations system and its work are the widely accepted components needed to bring about a more effective, responsive, representative, democratic and accountable world Organization. These modifications, which are currently under intense consideration at various levels, will, to a large extent, determine the effectiveness of the United Nations in the years to come.

Since January 1994, the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and other matters has been formulating a set of guidelines for the ongoing reform process. The general issue before us here is the enhancement of the representative character of the Security Council and the democratization of its method of work. Strongly in favour of a comprehensive reform, Turkey last year formally introduced a proposal for the enlargement of the Security Council. As the representative character of the Council has, despite minor adjustments, eroded steadily, we believe that a Council with at least 25 members would be more representative and thus more effective. We hold the view that the Council should be enlarged by 10 additional non-permanent members and that the proposed new additional seats should rotate among a predetermined list of about 30 to 40 countries. These countries should be selected within the geographical groups according to a set of objective criteria that can be modified, of course, in time. The list would consequently be flexible and updated after a certain period of time to conform to arising new conditions.

As regards to its working methods and procedures, the Council has already taken some important steps. There is, however, a widespread belief that these steps fall short of the legitimate expectations of the great majority of the Member States. Hence, more work needs to be done in this sphere, especially on questions on which important differences still exist.

On the other hand, the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System is in the process of formulating recommendations for reform, with the General Assembly and the Secretariat as its main areas of interest. Turkey favours the continuation of the mandate of the Working Group to enable it to complete its work.

The challenges and risks we face in the military security field call for measures that are broad in scope and application. This feature alone underscores the unique mandate and authority of the United Nations to address these challenges in their global dimensions. Arms control and disarmament — focusing distinctly and with a sense of urgency on measures and regimes destined to curb the alarming trends in the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and in the technologies for their means of delivery — must remain high on our agenda.

Turkey, as a Member State of the Conference on Disarmament, is pleased to have joined the overwhelming majority of nations in the efforts to conclude and adopt the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The Treaty, which I signed on 24 September, constitutes an indispensable step towards the eventual goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Accumulation of conventional weapons beyond legitimate defense needs is inherently destabilizing. Devising responsible policies to be globally adhered to in arms transfers, with due regard to the impact of such transfers on regional and international stability, is not a lesser priority. We must ensure that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms becomes a more effective tool for monitoring and for transparency in transfers. On a parallel track, the international community must vigorously pursue a more concerted effort to eradicate illicit arms trafficking, not solely as an arms and export-control measure, but more importantly as a key component in the international fight against terrorism.

One of the most daunting tasks before the United Nations is to foster greater international solidarity and concerted action against terrorism. We should not shy away from the responsibility to meet this challenge head-on, because terrorism not only poses a threat to international peace and stability, but also violates the most fundamental human right of all: the very right to live. International cooperation is imperative if we choose to live free of fear. The United Nations has to play a central role in this respect. General Assembly resolutions on human rights and terrorism and a Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism are significant milestones, paving the way for effective international cooperation to eradicate this common enemy. In combating terrorism, we should not lose sight of the fact that what is equally important is to fight against, and not to condone, the countries that are behind it. Transnational organized crime, with its connections to drug trafficking and terrorist organizations, also poses a serious threat to the stability of our societies. We will continue to vigorously support international cooperation to combat this evil.

In 1995, we also celebrated the United Nations Year for Tolerance. A culture of tolerance — which is vital for consolidating democracy and preventing ethnic conflicts, racist tendencies and xenophobia — has been promoted through various international and regional activities under the umbrella of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Current developments unmistakably demonstrate how crucial it is to keep this precious concept alive within society and in bilateral, regional and international relations. We attach great importance to the follow-up of the Year and will present a draft resolution under the relevant agenda item of the General Assembly.

Located on the fault line of several regions fraught with conflicts and instability, Turkey naturally is seriously concerned by developments on its periphery that threaten regional and international peace and security. We have been playing a crucial role in the efforts to find lasting and just solutions to the current problems. We are also actively taking part in various United Nations initiatives, including peacekeeping operations and preventive diplomacy activities.

Turning to one of the questions that is high on our agenda, our fundamental policy towards Iraq continues to be our commitment to the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of that country. The full compliance by Iraq with all of its obligations under international law and relevant Security Council resolutions remains vital for the return to normalcy in the region. Our main objective here is the restoration of peace, stability and security on our borders, as well as in the region as a whole. We are closely following the recent developments in northern Iraq, which may further aggravate the already delicate situation in the region. To bring durable calm to the area, all segments of the local population — Kurds, Turkomans in particular, since they have not been mentioned up to this point to the extent that they deserve; Arabs; Assyrians; and others — should fully participate in any local administrative arrangement, and their rights should be guaranteed. Northern Iraq should not be permitted to serve as an area that poses a threat to the security of the neighbouring countries. Turkey will not tolerate terrorist elements using northern Iraq to stage terrorist acts against its territory. We are determined to take all necessary measures to protect our legitimate security interests and to deny terrorist elements the possibility of launching terrorist operations against our population from northern Iraq.

We have fulfilled our responsibilities emanating from the sanctions regime against Iraq, despite the extreme economic burden this has entailed for our country. More than six years after the sanctions' inception, Turkey is now at the forefront of the countries that have been directly and most adversely affected by the sanctions regime. In fact, the heavy toll we have been required to pay has long exceeded our ability to sustain the financial strain on our economy, nor can we pay it any longer. Security Council resolution 986 (1995), when implemented, will alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people while also bringing limited relief for Turkey. However, this relief can in no way be commensurate with our losses. Consequently, we have applied to the United Nations Sanctions Committee with a view to obtaining further appropriate compensation within the framework of the sanctions regime. In this context, I wish to reiterate that we attach great importance to the implementation of Security Council resolution 986 (1995) as soon as possible.

In the wider context of the Middle East, we are concerned about what we hope will be only a temporary impasse in the Middle East peace process. As a devoted supporter of the peace process, which we regard as the only viable alternative for the region, we desire to see it pick up its momentum. This indisputably requires the parties to live up to their commitments.

As we underlined in our statement before the Security Council on 27 September, any action that may adversely affect the peace process should be avoided. The Israeli decision to open an entrance to a tunnel in the vicinity of the Mosque and the chain of reactions it provoked are of that nature. We are deeply saddened by the high number of casualties. We call on both sides to exercise utmost restraint and to prevent further violence. We urge the Israeli Government to review its decision and to refrain from any action that can be construed as provocation and from resorting to the use of force. We welcome Security Council resolution 1073 (1996). We expect President Arafat and Prime Minister Netanyahu to meet immediately to find a way out of this crisis.

One of the main obstacles blocking the path to a comprehensive peace in the Middle East continues to be terrorism. It must be eliminated if the quest for a lasting peace and stability is to prevail. We advocate and stand ready to take part in enhanced cooperation on the bilateral, regional and international levels. Similarly, we expect all countries to do their share to this very end. It is with this understanding that we participated in the summit of Sharm el-Sheikh, convened to demonstrate the resolve of the international community to fight against terrorism on a united front. The eventual success of the peace process will also hinge on our collective ability to promote mutually beneficial economic cooperation and interdependence among the countries of the Middle East.

As a Balkan country, we firmly believe that peace, justice and legitimacy in the Balkans remain vital for international peace and stability. We hold the view that any cooperative scheme in the Balkans should include all and exclude none. We were profoundly distressed for a long time that, during the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, lack of resolute international intervention at the very outset of the aggression and war led to bloodshed and atrocities unparalleled in recent history. The developments that took place prior to the Dayton peace Agreement proved once again that turning a blind eye to aggression only further aggravates crisis situations, causing untold human suffering and making it all the more difficult to find solutions.

We are actively participating in the implementation of both the military and civilian aspects of the Dayton peace Agreement, and in the international efforts to reconstruct and rehabilitate Bosnia and Herzegovina. We are also conducting, together with the United States, a joint programme to train and equip the army of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to provide the Federation with the means to preserve its territorial integrity and to ensure military parity.

We welcome the recently held elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We consider the realization of these elections, despite existing hardships, an important development for Bosnia and Herzegovina's future. We hope that this development will lead to the creation of a positive political climate conducive to the attainment of lasting peace and stability and to the establishment of the constitutional, legislative, administrative and security structures of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We urge the international community to remain committed to the cause of Bosnia and Herzegovina; to remain vigilant as regards any ill intention against the independence and territorial integrity of that country; to ensure the return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes; to seek the arrest and extradition to The Hague of indicted war criminals; to prevent any negative outside interference that could potentially impede the process of peaceful and democratic reintegration; and to make available the assistance pledged for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Bosnia.

Turkey enjoys good-neighbourly relations with the Balkan countries. However, a number of issues between Turkey and Greece, mostly related to the Aegean, remain unresolved. We have always advocated that disputes should be settled by peaceful means and through dialogue and constructive negotiations. Consequently, we have made several appeals to Greece to seek an overall solution to all the existing issues that stand between us. However, this does not mean that we would accept any *fait accompli*. We still expect Greece to give these appeals the full consideration and positive response they deserve. We would like to hope that the new Greek Government, emerging from the recent elections, will adopt a more forthcoming stance in this regard. Unfortunately, the recent statement of the Greek Minister for Foreign Affairs, from this very rostrum on 27 September, does not bode well. Distortion and misrepresentation of the established facts, as well as unfounded and unjustified allegations, will not serve the creation of the climate of confidence and friendship we wish to see in our bilateral relations.

In Cyprus, in the period that has elapsed since the last session of the General Assembly, regrettably no noticeable developments have taken place towards a comprehensive settlement. It has not been possible to resume the direct talks between the two sides under the mission of good offices of the United Nations Secretary-General, due to the negative stance of the Greek Cypriots. The Greek Cypriot side continues not to acknowledge that, in the past, the United Nations negotiating process and direct dialogue between the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot leaders not only served to establish the key parameters of a final settlement — which are already on the table — but also played an important role in defusing tensions between the two communities. It is all too evident that attempts to derail the United Nations negotiating process can only further complicate the already difficult road to a just solution.

The recent regrettable events in and around the buffer zone and, especially the slaying of a Turkish Cypriot soldier, have proven once again what the lack of dialogue as well as inflammatory rhetoric and provocation can lead to. I hope that the Greek Cypriot side will not fail this time to draw the necessary conclusions. It is evident that the need to reduce tensions and build up confidence on the island makes the resumption of the direct talks, without any precondition, all the more urgent. The Turkish Cypriot side has already made public its readiness to this end. Turkey is committed to supporting the renewed efforts of the United Nations and expects the same constructive approach from Greece and the Greek Cypriot side.

Peace and legitimacy are yet to be restored in another area of conflagration: the Caucasus. Indeed, this region continues to be wracked by various conflicts, that cause immense human anguish and threaten peace, security and stability. Turkey has close bonds with the countries of the region and attaches utmost importance to the preservation of regional peace and stability. The ongoing occupation of more than one fifth of the territory of Azerbaijan by Armenian forces continues to be a source of grave concern for Turkey. More than one million Azeris are still displaced in their own country and living in unacceptable conditions.

They should not be permitted to endure another bitter winter in such conditions. Turkey has been striving to help bring about a peaceful and just settlement of the dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia. We will continue to contribute to the efforts of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe with a view to establishing peace, security and stability in the region. We earnestly believe that all countries in the region have much to gain from the restoration of peace and legitimacy in the Caucasus. The attainment of a just peace will pave the way for a climate of cooperation to serve the common prosperity of all the countries of the region.

The conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, also continues to be a source of distress. We attach the utmost importance to the preservation of the territorial integrity, sovereignty and unity of Georgia and firmly believe that the international community should deploy all efforts to bring about a just solution to the conflict on that basis. To this end, we fully support the United Nations-sponsored peace talks between the parties and stand ready to contribute to those efforts.

One of the important aspects of the economic development of the Caucasus and Central Asia is the exportation of their natural resources, for which Turkey is in a position to provide easy access to world markets. I can mention here Turkey's proposed Baku-Ceyhan oil-pipeline project and natural-gas pipeline projects, which will serve the common interests and welfare of the entire region.

Afghanistan is yet another conflict area where the international community has been unable to help bring about a just and lasting solution. Our close ties with that country are deeply rooted in history and we are troubled by the tragic consequences of the ongoing conflict. We are all too aware of the possibility of a spillover effect of the conflict in the region. We believe that this terrible conflict may be brought to an end and peace restored through direct negotiations between the fighting groups and the formation of a broad-based Government with the participation of all parties. Turkey is anxious to see, as soon as possible, the signing of a ceasefire agreement and the beginning of peace negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations. We will be pleased to host a meeting for such negotiations and will continue to support fully the efforts of the United Nations Special Mission to mediate a settlement respecting the territorial integrity, sovereignty and unity of Afghanistan.

As an extension of its geography and against the backdrop of its history, Turkey finds itself at the multidirectional crossroads of several continents and different cultures. It acts as an important bridge between East and West, combining the values of the East with the ideals and institutions of the West in a unique synthesis. Strong historical, cultural and fraternal ties exist between Turkey and the countries of the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Middle East. We spare no effort in contributing to the resolution of conflicts and preventing new ones from erupting, strengthening regional and international cooperation and promoting tolerance and dialogue. This is the very core and essence of the basic principles that define our foreign policy. We shall continue to place our assets at the disposal and service of regional and global peace, stability and prosperity.

In this context, I wish to underline the eminent role played by Turkey in such regional cooperation schemes as the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Economic Cooperation Organization, as well as its active participation in cooperation in the Mediterranean basin.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate our sincere desire to see the fifty-first session of the General Assembly become an important milestone on the road to the third millennium. We have to gather our strength, pool our resources and ignite our imagination to build, collectively, a better world. National interests and objectives will surely remain at the core of our policies. However, on the eve of a new millennium, the time has certainly come to take a broader view and to replace rivalry with cooperation, intolerance with tolerance and confrontation with dialogue and conciliation. We should at all costs avoid *faits accomplis* and double standards in international relations. A revitalized and reinvigorated United Nations entering its second half-century can make a significant contribution to assisting us all to attain our highest goals and aspirations. Let us not forget, however, that the task of shaping a better future is entirely in our hands, for we are the United Nations.

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia, the Honourable Alexander Downer.

Mr. Downer (Australia): I should like to extend warm congratulations to Mr. Razali on his election as President of the General Assembly. As a close neighbour of Malaysia, Australia will confidently rely on his experience and sound judgement as he presides over this important session of the Assembly.

I feel greatly honoured to be leading for the first time the Australian delegation to a session of the General Assembly.

A year ago, when the Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations, it made an important promise: to give to the twenty-first century a United Nations that would serve effectively the peoples in whose name it was established. We must keep that promise, but to do so we will need a clear view of contemporary circumstances and of those which we can see unfolding into the twenty-first century.

The landscape that was revealed at the end of the cold war, just a little over five years ago, has many new features, some of which are still not clear. What is clear, however, is that we face new challenges and that we have new opportunities that few of us would have imagined five years ago.

The most compelling of these opportunities is to take future steps in nuclear-arms control and disarmament. The possibility of taking such steps is surely a principal outcome of the end of the cold war. This was firmly underlined last Tuesday when, in a single day, 67 countries signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. That number, only a week later, is now nearly 100. But beyond this achievement lies another major opportunity, which is to turn our national and international attention to enhancing human security in all its aspects.

Our dynamic times have presented us with new problems. Such problems include the major non-military threats to security: the clandestine arms trade, the narcotics trade, HIV/AIDS, the need to stabilize the rate of growth of the world's population and major threats to the environment.

The elemental characteristics of such non-military threats to security are that they cannot be defeated by weapons. They cross state boundaries and they can affect whole populations. These characteristics lead to one central conclusion, that is, action on these problems must be the subject of international cooperation.

Multilateral cooperation can, does and must take many forms. But the role of the United Nations is unique because of its universality and because of the rules we find in the Charter of the United Nations.

It is for these reasons — the nature of the opportunities we have before us, the problems we face and the unique role and capability of the United Nations — that we must keep last year's promise of a United Nations fit for the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Australia's particular commitment to the United Nations is founded on the belief, articulated as far back as the 1950s by the then Foreign Minister, Richard Casey, that the United Nations represents the practical effort of the Governments and peoples of the world to attain the high goals to which they are pledged through the United Nations Charter: international peace and security and the economic and social advancement of all peoples.

Australia has contributed readily to achieving those goals. Whether by paying its financial contributions in full and on time, by providing personnel to peacekeeping operations or through its contributions to development programmes, Australia has been determined to see the United Nations succeed. I commit Australia today to continuing such involvement in the work of the United Nations.

At present, a window of opportunity in arms control and disarmament is open to us. If we do not take it soon, it will close. Large and sophisticated nuclear and conventional arsenals continue to exist. In a number of regions, suspicions remain close to the surface. The risks of the spread of weapons of mass destruction have, in certain respects, increased.

In Australia's view, two tasks are fundamental: first, building and strengthening international institutions and instruments; and secondly, developing new thinking in arms control and disarmament so as to push the international agenda forward in constructive and realistic ways.

To achieve progress with institutions and instruments, Members of the United Nations need to work together on at least six priorities. These priorities for international cooperation are to make the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and its enhanced review process operate more effectively; to strengthen the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards; to achieve an early start for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons; to reach early agreement on effective verification machinery for the Biological Weapons Convention; to pursue the goal of a global ban on anti-personnel landmines in conjunction with a global approach to the problem of demining; and to achieve a ban on the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons.

As we pursue these priorities in the multilateral system, we should keep firmly in mind that progress in regional security, particularly in regions of weapons-proliferation concern, will make a crucial contribution.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is of course the immediate priority. Its adoption by the General Assembly and its opening for signature on 24 September were major milestones for the international community. The Treaty is a product of our times. It flows from a long and commonly held global concern. Its death was something the international community simply could not allow.

Australia was therefore prepared to take the lead in bringing the Treaty to the General Assembly. The overwhelming support for the resolution demonstrated the strength of international feeling against nuclear testing. This Treaty was wanted and needed, but it has also helped change the international climate. We can now reasonably hope and expect that nuclear testing will not be part of the future to be faced by succeeding generations. In a world with a mixed history on controlling the development and spread of destructive weaponry, that is something of which we can all be proud.

The Treaty must become universal. We urge all those countries that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty as soon as possible so that it can be fully implemented as quickly as possible. There is no merit in the argument that says that, because there is more to be done in nuclear-arms control and disarmament, we should in some way scorn or reject a Treaty that bans all nuclear explosions forever. This ban has intrinsic value. We must now keep up the positive momentum generated by the adoption of the Treaty.

This brings me to the second task: developing new ideas. Because building institutions and strengthening international instruments will not be enough, the international community must also develop imaginative new ways of guiding the world into the next century.

The Australian Government established the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons to address the questions of whether a nuclear-weapon-free world is feasible and, if so, the measures which could be taken to attain that objective. I am delighted to confirm that the Commission has more than met Australia's expectations. Its report will make a major contribution to international thinking and discussion on nuclear disarmament. The Australian Government will take it forward by circulating it today in this Hall, will present it to the Secretary-General tomorrow and introduce it to the Conference on Disarmament in January.

The Canberra Commission report recommends a political commitment by the nuclear-weapon States to the elimination of nuclear weapons. That is the first and central requirement. The report then sets out six immediate steps: taking nuclear forces off alert; removal of warheads from delivery vehicles; ending the deployment of non-strategic nuclear weapons; ending nuclear testing; initiating negotiations further to reduce United States and Russian nuclear arsenals; and an agreement among the nuclear-weapon States on reciprocal no-first-use undertakings and of a non-use undertaking by them in relation to the non-nuclear-weapon States.

The Commission also recommends three reinforcing steps: action to prevent further horizontal proliferation; developing verification arrangements for a nuclear-weapon-free world; and the cessation of the production of fissile material for nuclear-explosive purposes. The Commission placed particular emphasis on the importance of effective verification in the achievement and maintenance of a nuclear-weapons-free world.

Having at last, after 33 years, met the challenge of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the international community must now push on with further practical and realistic measures on nuclear-arms control and disarmament.

As already indicated, one such measure is the negotiation of a convention under which it would be agreed that there will be no further manufacturing of weapons-grade fissile material. This convention should be sought now.

Any discussion of arms control and disarmament in today's world that failed to address the question of landmines would be sadly incomplete. These hideous and diabolically inexpensive weapons must be banned. Australia will support efforts that will be made at this session of the Assembly to take the next step towards the negotiation of an international convention to that effect.

But in the meantime, there are in excess of 100 million of these maiming weapons distributed in the soil of too many countries. Demining must proceed at a far faster rate than has been the case in the past. There have been technological barriers to increasing that rate and Australia has therefore proposed that a technology working group be established among interested and capable countries with the purpose of designing the equipment required for demining on a far larger and quicker scale.

If there is any doubt about the need for this action, I would place on record here that, if the current rate of demining in Cambodia were to be maintained, that country, which has struggled so hard to repair itself, would not be free of these mines for a further 130 years. This must be unacceptable to all. That is why the Australian Government recently committed $12 million to practical demining initiatives in the war-ravaged fields within our own region.

Security Council reform is another vitally important item on the peace-and-security agenda. The three key issues to be tackled are expansion, transparency and the effectiveness of sanctions regimes.

There is now a general acceptance that the Security Council must be expanded and modernized if it is to manage international peace and security more effectively. Although Australia wants to avoid making the Council too unwieldy, there can be little doubt that its membership needs to reflect better current geopolitical and economic circumstances. Expanding the membership is an important element in achieving this and Australia believes that an expansion up to a total Council membership of 25 States would be reasonable.

This brings me to the more contentious point of permanent as against non-permanent membership. Australia has made clear that it supports the claims of Japan and Germany to permanent membership. This is the very least the United Nations can do to acknowledge their major-Power status and the financial contribution they are making to the Organization.

Australia also advocates permanent seats on the Council for underrepresented regions. As to how that is to be achieved, we remain flexible. Whether those seats are filled by a single member or rotate among leading Member States agreed on by regional groupings needs to be discussed further, primarily by those regions concerned. We also see scope for an increase in the number of non-permanent members of the Council, again in the interests of ensuring greater balance in representation.

I turn now to the need for greater transparency in Security Council processes. Consultative mechanisms have improved in recent times, notably between the Secretariat and troop-contributing countries, but more needs to be done. Australia is committed to trying to improve the way in which the Security Council interacts with non-members so that the Council's activities become more responsive to the United Nations as a whole.

More needs to be done, too, to build the Council's relationship with regional organizations. Good progress has been recorded to date, but United Nations and regional organizations should meet regularly in order to develop further the appropriate division of responsibilities.

The Council also has an important role to play in preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and enhancing the effectiveness of the non-proliferation regime.

Australia wants to see improvements in the effectiveness of United Nations sanctions because we recognize that the Security Council's use of collective sanctions continues to be an important and, at times, contentious enforcement measure. The effectiveness of sanctions regimes could be improved in three ways: clearer drafting of Security Council resolutions; providing specific objectives and realistic time-frames; and through relevant sanctions committees providing clear interpretative guidance on implementation. These are changes that are essential for the Security Council's dynamism. We need to press ahead with them to ensure that the Council reflects modern-day circumstances and realities.

Our contemporary circumstances have opened up new needs and prospects for peacekeeping and preventive diplomacy. Initial post-cold-war hopes about the capabilities of the Security Council have been tempered. It has become clear that many conflicts are intractable. Experience has taught us that it is difficult to reach agreement on suitable approaches and to find enough resources, particularly in the area of peacekeeping.

The Security Council must be realistic in the implementation of its Charter responsibilities. It must resist pressure to embark on missions before it has completed adequate preparations, developed a focused sense of the mission's goals and agreed on a clearly articulated mandate.

At this very moment, the United Nations is confronted with major challenges in such diverse situations as those in Cyprus, Burundi and Liberia. Australia has been contributing personnel to the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, for example, for over 20 years and has been saddened by the recent incidents of violence there. The time has come to resolve that situation, which requires the assistance of all parties.

One very important area of reform for United Nations peacekeeping is to establish an enhanced rapid-reaction capability. There have been many proposals on this issue, but the Australian Government believes that the Canadian study, *Towards a Rapid Reaction Capability for the United Nations*, contains some commendable recommendations, including the development of a deployable, operational-level headquarters to strengthen planning for operations.

Australia welcomes recent moves by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to begin implementing measures aimed at improving United Nations rapid-reaction capability, but in taking these measures forward, the United Nations should consult adequately with all Member States.

Australia is also keen to see the United Nations develop the preventive-diplomacy agenda and it welcomes the greater resources the Secretariat now devotes to such activity. The Security Council, the General Assembly and the good offices of the Secretary-General, as well as regional arrangements and agencies, have important roles to play in preventive diplomacy. Australia supports greater use of Chapter VI of the Charter on the pacific settlement of disputes. Article 33 is particularly important. The Security Council can use it to undertake a leadership role by calling on disputing parties to seek a solution using negotiation, mediation and other peaceful means.

As I indicated at the beginning of this statement, one of the chief results of the end of the cold war must surely be an increase in our ability to turn away from military concerns and to give a greater degree of attention to threats to the security of individuals, as distinct from those threats to the security of States that have dominated our thinking in the past, important and basic though they have been and remain.

In today's world and in the world we see unfolding into the twenty-first century, the security of far too many people is threatened in ways no less immediate than the threat of the gun. I have in mind narcotics, HIV/AIDS and major threats to the environment. These threats cannot be dealt with effectively by States acting alone. Sometimes they require new international law, but more specifically they require political will to defeat them and to foster cooperation among nations to ensure maximum effectiveness of action.

The United Nations is the ideal environment in which to develop such cooperation. It is here that the world is represented. We have here a tradition of debate, of discussion, of identification of problems and of consensus. We have the ability to make law when it is necessary. Above all, we have pledged ourselves to defending and providing a decent standard of living to the peoples we represent.

There is also a regional role and, in that context, Australia was pleased to have promoted the concept of a regional HIV/AIDS ministers' meeting at the Post-Ministerial Conference of this year's session of the Association of South-East Asian Nations.

As we move towards the twenty-first century, it will be crucial to the execution of that responsibility to ensure that we have a healthy United Nations that is devoted to international cooperation aimed at defeating the major non-military threats to the security of the human family. These threats are tragically evident to us today. They will only become larger if we do not agree, now, to begin cooperative action to defeat them. History will surely judge our generation harshly if, having identified the problems of human security, we fail for lack of will to address their solutions.

Another great requirement of our times is the economic needs of people and the promotion of development. Much has been done through the United Nations and its agencies to advance the development cause. They have been pivotal to the emergence of a multilateral approach in which institutions with special competencies such as the specialized agencies, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, together with policy deliberative bodies such as the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, have complementary roles to play.

Development is about more than just economic growth, however. There is also the need for internal stability, sound environmental management, a vigorous civil society and a lively democracy. The United Nations is uniquely placed to build consensus on how to advance these various elements of the development agenda.

In this context, Australia welcomes the constructive outcomes achieved at the ninth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) held in Midrand, South Africa, earlier this year. The decisions taken there should help developing countries benefit from the opportunities of economic globalization.

We also underline the importance of encouraging investment and technology transfers and providing trade opportunities to stimulate economic development. Such development is the only enduring foundation for independence and economic and social well-being.

It is in Africa that these development challenges are most stark. Rich in promise yet wearied by emergencies, Africa stands today at a decisive juncture in its history.

African leaders seized the moment with the Organization of African Unity's 1995 Cairo Agenda for Action, in which they called for immediate action to implement the development strategies for which an international consensus now exists. The United Nations responded this year with the launch of a 10-year, $25 billion United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa.

The Australian Government welcomes the Special Initiative as a concrete demonstration of the international community's concern with Africa. The international community cannot allow disease, poverty, war and underdevelopment to become entrenched in the 53 nations — almost one-third of United Nations Member States — that make up the African continent.

The world must continue to seek ways to break the poverty cycle in Africa so that its potential for economic development is realized. Sustainable economic development is essential to overcome poverty, disease and conflict.

The United Nations system needs to give greater focus and impetus to the development effort in Africa.

I now turn to the issue of human rights. Human rights are important in international relations for two main reasons: first, political instability and major conflict can result where human rights are breached or are under threat; and secondly, the freedom and dignity of individuals is, in itself, of fundamental value to the world community.

The Australian Government aims for practical outcomes that will improve the lives of individual men, women and children. We recognize the importance of dialogue and cooperation, based on mutual respect. In addition to public and private diplomacy, Australia's approach to the improvement of human rights also encompasses development cooperation.

Australia strongly supports the development of strong and independent national human rights institutions. For example, Australia provided financial support for a workshop of Asia-Pacific national human rights institutions, which agreed to establish an informal forum to work for the strengthening and further development of such institutions in the region. Australia has also provided financial support to the United Nations for the creation of a position of special adviser to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on national human rights institutions.

Finally, it is important to address the issue of reform of the United Nations. Much work still needs to be done to bring about greater efficiency and effectiveness in the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

While Australia applauds the dedication and hard work of the General Assembly Working Groups that were set up in 1995, Member States must not lose sight of the fact that to achieve real change, the Groups have to come up with realistic and achievable recommendations. Those recommendations must in turn lead to practical and measurable outcomes.

It is important that the work of the groups be focused and that their momentum be restored so that early and positive outcomes can be achieved. We must all commit ourselves to this end and to bringing about structured change within the United Nations.

It is also crucial that the financial situation of the United Nations be repaired. Australia believes that all Members should pay their contributions in full and on time. We therefore welcome recent moves by some countries to pay their arrears.

It is time to establish a revised scale of assessed contributions that more fairly reflects what Governments can pay. The current minimum payment is too high for many small-economy countries, and Australia would like to see it reduced or even removed.

These are the reforms that Australia believes are necessary to equip the United Nations for its role in the twenty-first century.

It is in this overall context that Australia is deeply committed to contributing to the United Nations goal of maintaining international peace and security in an active way. Serving a term as a non-permanent member of the Security Council during 1997-1998 would enable Australia to make a substantive contribution to that goal and to work for a more effective, modernized and transparent Council. That is why we have asked for the support of Member States at the elections to be held a few weeks from now.

Let me conclude by summing up what I have said today. The United Nations is unique and needed, but it must pursue, and work on the basis of, a relevant Agenda. This is the central point. The United Nations must be put to work on the agenda of the twenty-first century.

Much work needs to be done to tackle the key challenges that face the United Nations. Only a sustained, cooperative effort among all Member States will bring success. Australia will make that effort.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia, His Excellency Mr. Habib Ben Yahia.

Mr. Ben Yahia (Tunisia) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me first of all to convey to Mr. Razali Ismail my sincere and heartfelt congratulations on the occasion of his election to the presidency of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. I am convinced that thanks to his wise and able leadership and his extensive experience in the field of international relations, the proceedings of our session will be successful.

Malaysia's presidency of the General Assembly is clear testimony to the respect that Mr. Razali's country enjoys within the international community, which appreciates the great and efficient role played by Malaysia at the regional and international levels in order to strengthen and consolidate relations among nations on the basis of peace, justice and cooperation. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the excellent relations of friendship and fruitful cooperation that exist between our two countries.

I should like also to convey my sincere thanks to Mr. Razali's predecessor, Mr. Freitas do Amaral, for his valuable efforts during his presidency of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. I wish to mention in particular his contribution to helping advance the process of reform of the United Nations, in order to make it more efficient in the light of the changes the world is witnessing.

I should like also to pay tribute to Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali and to convey to him our appreciation and support for his continued selfless dedication as head of the Secretariat of the United Nations. My delegation also appreciates his courageous initiatives, especially his Special Initiative for Africa, as well as his constructive proposals within the Agenda for Peace and the Agenda for Development. Tunisia, which supports the renewal of Mr. Boutros-Ghali's mandate, stresses the importance of continuing the reform process undertaken in recent years.

With the end of the cold war, the international community has entered a new era of international relations that aims to reject the use of force and violence as a means of settling conflicts, and to put an end to the arms race. This trend favours the logic of wisdom and moderation by resorting to peaceful means and preventive diplomacy, which offer possibilities for dialogue, concertation and negotiation to resolve conflicts, disputes and crises, however complex they may be.

We welcome this emerging trend in international relations, which is a consecration of the principles and purposes of the United Nations as enunciated in its Charter. This trend must be strengthened and consolidated in order to eliminate sources of tension and defuse conflicts before they break out.

The international community welcomed with enthusiasm the start of the peace process in the Middle East. This raised hopes of seeing the parties arrive at a true, comprehensive, just and honourable peace, thus putting an end to a cruel conflict that has lasted for almost half a century, during which time the peoples of the region have experienced the horrors of war, destruction, exodus and occupation. This peace settlement should be based on international law and United Nations resolutions, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), and on the principle of the exchange of land for peace.

The Madrid Conference and the ensuing intensive negotiations, which resulted in the Oslo, Washington and Cairo agreements, led us to believe that the new peace process was finally on the right track. However, the agenda of the new Israeli Government has dashed the hopes of the peoples of the region. This agenda has indeed blocked the peace process on all tracks. An increase in Israeli pressures and provocations, which aim ultimately at imposing the policy of the *fait accompli*, has hindered the Palestinian people's progress towards achieving their legitimate right to self-determination and to create their own independent State.

The bloody events triggered by the opening of a tunnel under the Holy Mosque of Al-Aqsa emphasize the need for decisive international action to bring the Israeli Government to abide by the agreements concluded with the Palestinian Authority and to comply with international law regarding the settlement of the question of Palestine.

Tunisia is concerned by the stagnation of the peace process and its negative effects on building the future of the region on the basis of peace, security, stability and cooperation among its peoples. Tunisia considers that Israel must re-evaluate its present policy and commit itself to respecting the principles of the peace process and to implementing the agreements already signed.

We also call upon the international community, particularly the sponsors of the peace process, to spare no effort in facilitating the resumption of the peace negotiations as soon as possible in order to avoid any risk of failure, which could affect the credibility of this process and lead to the return of confrontation and the escalation of violence, extremism and terrorism. We believe that confidence-building, good faith and a sincere commitment to a peaceful solution are necessary to advance this process. The commitment of all parties to achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace is essential to ensuring the security and stability of the States of the region as well as the coexistence of their peoples.

As stated by President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali on many occasions, Tunisia is committed to following the same approach it has taken since the beginning of the peace process, by establishing a close link between each step towards normalization and the progress achieved by the negotiations on all tracks.

The establishment of peace in the Middle East depends on the maintenance of security and stability in the Gulf region. Tunisia, which is deeply concerned by recent developments in that region, calls upon all parties to show restraint, avoid any escalation and remain committed to international legality and to the implementation of all United Nations resolutions. Tunisia also reiterates its commitment to respect the sovereignty of all States in the region as well as their territorial integrity and inviolability.

We also call for an end to the suffering that the Iraqi people have been experiencing for several years, and we hope that recent developments in the region will not aggravate this situation.

Tunisia believes that the time has come to lift the embargo imposed on the Libyan people in view of the numerous positive initiatives taken by Libya, the League of Arab States and the Organization of African Unity, all of which aim at reaching a peaceful and just solution and at putting an end to the suffering of the brotherly Libyan people within the framework of international legality.

Devoted to peace and a staunch supporter of just causes, Tunisia reiterates its solidarity with the United Arab Emirates and its full support for that country's endeavour to recover through peaceful means, which include appealing to the International Court of Justice, the islands of Great Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa.

Turning to the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Tunisia expresses its satisfaction at the return of peace to this country, and hopes that the recent elections will mark the beginning of a new era in which concord, understanding and common action will prevail, thus allowing the establishment of the foundations of the Bosnian State.

We note that today the international community is giving priority to disarmament as the best means of ensuring and consolidating international security. Considerable progress has been made in this regard, especially in the area of controlling the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, in particular chemical and nuclear weapons.

Tunisia welcomes the adoption by the General Assembly of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and its opening for signature. We hope that all Member States will adhere to this Treaty, in order to ensure its universal application. The Treaty's conclusion, as well as the anticipated strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention, due to be reviewed soon in order to provide it with a verification mechanism, will no doubt consolidate the progress made thus far in the field of disarmament.

While expressing our appreciation for the declaration of Africa as a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, we hope that our continent will be relieved of all weapons of mass destruction. We also reiterate our call to free the Middle East from all nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction.

While emphasizing the necessity of introducing efficient measures for ensuring a total ban of weapons of mass destruction, we believe that it is also essential to tackle the issue of conventional weapons, particularly the question of the accumulation and illegal trade in light weapons. This problem is not only serious but is growing more so every day, since these are the most commonly used weapons in current conflicts and recent terrorist operations.

In addition to its contribution to disarmament efforts, Tunisia has always supported United Nations peacekeeping efforts around the world. From the early 1960s on, it has taken part in United Nations operations in many African countries, Cambodia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and elsewhere.

Convinced of the importance of these operations in maintaining international peace and security, Tunisia called on member States of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to create special units within their armed forces for participation when necessary in peacekeeping operations on the African continent.

While welcoming the decision of the United Nations on establishing a system of standby forces to act to intervene rapidly and efficiently in peacekeeping operations, Tunisia solemnly declares its readiness today to participate in that system, thus confirming our commitment to the Organization and to its role in the maintenance of world peace and security.

Intolerance, racism, organized crime, the illegal arms and drug trades, the illegal traffic in human beings, terrorism and extremism in all its forms are all phenomena that have taken on a transnational dimension. The international community should ensure that appropriate solutions are found by means of a global approach based on the definition and implementation of international cooperation strategies in order to contain and eradicate these scourges.

On many occasions and before various international and regional forums, my country has called the international community's attention to the dangers of re-emergent terrorism and extremism, which threaten the stability and security of States as well as the safety of individuals. In this vein, Tunisia called for the conduct of a comprehensive and thorough re-evaluation of the attitudes of all parties to these scourges through the establishment of international rules of conduct with the aim of fighting all illegal activities, particularly those related to terrorism, in order to find efficient and lasting remedies to these problems and to eliminate their deep-rooted causes.

Tunisia notes with satisfaction the increasing awareness of the need for the international community to join efforts in order to fight terrorism. We hope that the United Nations will adopt mandatory measures that would address this phenomenon by criminalizing all terrorist acts. We also hope that all member States will revise and adapt their relevant legislation to these measures.

Tunisia's steadfast efforts to consolidate the foundations of the country's political institutions and the rule of law and to promote and protect human rights in their global dimension flow from a civilized, irreversible choice made in accordance with universal values.

Eager to ensure respect for human dignity and to encourage ongoing development efforts to secure the well-being of all citizens, Tunisia has been able to reconcile, in a balanced manner, economic growth with the preservation of political, economic and social rights, the requisite foundations of democracy.

Tunisia will continue to advance the causes of human rights in the world and to support the United Nations Voluntary Fund for technical assistance in the field of human rights, as well as the Programme of Action for the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education.

We are persuaded that the dissemination of the culture of human rights will come to fruition only with the promotion of tolerance, which is an essential civilized value upon which are based all religions and human-rights ideals.

Tunisia placed particular emphasis on tolerance in the reform of its education system, since it is convinced that global change, the progress of civilization and culture, as well as economic and social growth, will be firmly established only when coming generations are well-prepared and when the values of peace, democracy and goodness are complemented by a culture of tolerance.

Economic globalization has opened new perspectives for international cooperation for development. But it has also had a negative impact on the economies of numerous developing countries that have been swept up in it without adequately preparing their economic and social structures.

In the new era, Tunisia has focused on setting up a comprehensive and multidimensional development strategy designed to assist the disadvantaged in society and based on a broadened concept of human rights. Tunisia's policy in this regard was based on a development approach aimed at providing equal opportunities to all levels of society and ensuring the well-being of all its citizens.

The human dimension for which Tunisia has opted in defining its development policies has led to a deeper spirit of solidarity within the population towards the underprivileged and vulnerable sectors and to granting them the highest priority. In order to achieve these objectives, President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali took the initiative of establishing an anti-poverty programme — the National Solidarity Fund — aimed at eradicating pockets of poverty and ensuring harmonious development for all social sectors.

The debt burden in the third world is a very serious problem that cannot be overlooked, since it constitutes the main obstacle to their efforts to achieve a regular development pattern, free from any shortcomings or failure. While we welcome the Group of Seven's economic communiqué on the issue of debt, we also stress the need to take appropriate measures to alleviate the debt burden of middle-income countries.

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization should implement the commitments undertaken by the international community in the framework of the major conferences held during the past five years. To this end, they need to mobilize the resources required to fund the programmes adopted by these conferences in the quest for sustainable development.

We welcome the process of reform initiated by the United Nations with the aim of adjusting to the emerging international environment, improving its functions and assuming its responsibilities as the institution best able to maintain peace and security, on the one hand, and to pursue and support efforts on behalf of the economic and social development of the developing countries, on the other.

To this end, it is equally important to continue the process of reform of the Organization with the aim of rationalizing and strengthening its role as the central pillar of international cooperation for achieving objectives and implementing programmes agreed upon by the international community, on the basis of priorities set by Governments seeking to eradicate poverty and to support employment and housing programmes, as well as those that provide basic services in the education and health sectors and offer protection to women, children and the socially underprivileged.

These objectives can be attained only through the use of jointly agreed criteria based on transparency and democracy in international relations, and by rejecting any policy that involves a double standard.

In order to preserve the prestige and credibility of the United Nations, it is necessary to implement the resolutions the Organization adopts and to follow up on the commitments entered into by States.

We would also like to underline the extreme importance we attach to the restructuring of the Security Council, so as to enable this eminent body to play its key role in the maintenance of international peace and security, while taking into consideration the need for an equitable geographical representation based on new geopolitical realities. I should like to recall in this respect that Tunisia supports granting Japan and Germany the status of permanent members of the Security Council, owing to the political and economic standing of both countries.

In accordance with the consensus reached at the thirtieth Organization of African Unity summit meeting, held in Tunis, we reaffirm Africa's right to at least two permanent seats on the Security Council that would rotate among all African States.

Tunisia supports any initiative that takes into account these principles, and it expresses its appreciation for the initiatives and ideas presented by some States, in particular friendly neighbouring Italy, in order to achieve a comprehensive vision regarding reform of the Security Council.

Finally, we believe that the success of our Organization depends on the determination of all Member States to act in conformity with the purposes and principles set out in the Charter, as well as on sincere political will, in order to allow our Organization to fulfil the aspirations and hopes of our peoples, who provide it the indispensable support it needs to guarantee its continued vitality, its renewed capacity and its durability.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Honduras, His Excellency Mr. Delmer Urbizo Panting.

Mr. Urbizo (Honduras) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Once again the United Nations General Assembly is meeting to take stock of the global situation and of the role that the Organization plays in that context.

I am confident that the experience, talent and diplomatic skills of our President, His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail, will play a decisive role in this complex undertaking. I wish him every success in his sensitive work.

I wish also to express my delegation's gratitude for the excellent job done by Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal, in the course of the last General Assembly session, which commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of this Organization.

My country has been observing very closely the administrative activities of Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his capacity as Secretary-General, and we feel bound to express our recognition of the poise with which he has guided the United Nations during these difficult times for the Organization and for the whole world. His undeniable qualities of statesmanship have averted crises, and his strength of character has succeeded in upholding the ideals on which this Organization is founded. I wish to convey to him, on my own behalf and on behalf of my Government, my sincere respect and admiration.

Honduras reiterates its conviction that international conflicts must be settled by peaceful and diplomatic means. For this reason, we recognize the importance and value of the 1995 Dayton peace agreement, the 1996 Paris agreements and the subsequent international agreements and commitments for which the international community prepared the way. These have led to a cessation of hostilities, the resumption of political talks, international recognition between Belgrade and Zagreb, and the establishment of relations between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

In the Americas, Haiti is an example of the results that can be achieved through concerted action and political will on the part of the international community in establishing, through the United Nations, operations designed to achieve, maintain and consolidate peace. My country wishes to express its satisfaction at having taken part in those operations, as well as in those carried out in Western Sahara.

In the same vein, we cannot overlook the problems of the subregion. Honduras has always viewed with concern the problems besetting its sister republics in Central America. For this reason, we acknowledge and support all efforts in this regard, in particular the agreements reached between the Government of Guatemala and the URNG.

At the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly, my country secured unanimous support in this body to occupy a seat in the Security Council as a non-permanent member. We believe that we have fully lived up to the trust vested in us, since we have worked in the Council in strict adherence to the principles and norms of international law enshrined in the United Nations Charter and in keeping with the foreign policy pursued by the President of the Republic, Mr. Carlos Roberto Reina.

Throughout our first term of presidency of the Council, in July last year, we succeeded in maintaining the necessary equanimity and balance to steer the work and the debates on the various issues brought before the presidency of the Council. These included humanitarian operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Rwanda and Burundi, as well as peace operations in Haiti, Angola and Liberia.

Tomorrow we will assume the presidency of the Security Council for the second time, and we shall work in the same spirit of cooperation and with genuine resolve to help bring about solutions to problems that arise in the area of international peace and security.

Central America has now returned to the world scene with a new, integrational approach that promotes joint action and allows it to speed up its development process. Our approach, grounded in history, tradition, solidarity and, above all, our awareness of a shared destiny, has made it possible for us to pool our efforts in seeking to achieve a higher level of economic development in all areas.

In the framework of the integration process in our subregion, since 1986 we have held a series of presidential summits, the first six of which were highly political in nature, fulfilling the purpose of securing peace and democratization in the region. The following ones, focusing on economic topics, led to the formation of the Central American Integration System (SICA) and defined our current agenda: alliance for sustainable development.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank this Assembly for the support it gave our System last year by granting it the status of observer, which will make it possible to achieve greater cooperation between the United Nations System and the Central American Integration System.

As we stand on the threshold of a new millennium, my Government is strongly committed to the responsibilities imposed by the world around us. In this respect, Honduras is in favour of greater democratization of the principal organs of the United Nations. We take the view that an increase in the number of permanent and non-permanent Members of the Security Council should be carried out in accordance with the principles of sovereign equality of States and equitable geographical distribution, and that it should reflect the expansion in the membership of the United Nations in recent decades so as to transform the Security Council into a more democratic and representative organ, that would thus be a more credible and effective instrument in fulfilling its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security without affecting its efficiency or the speed of its decision-making processes. Genuine democratization and real representativity in the Security Council should be the principal basis for the expansion of twenty-first-century world government.

We would all like to see a more competent, responsive and responsible United Nations. We should all like it to be better administered and more consolidated and to yield tangible results. To this end, it is essential to undertake meaningful reform in order to enhance its efficiency and to ensure that the United Nations can have a secure financial footing, robust administration and structural capacity, and a clear sense of purpose in tackling its tasks.

The General Assembly should play the role now played by costly world conferences, and it should be the forum for sustained thematic debates on important and topical issues held at regular intervals. At the same time, the traditional agenda of the Assembly should be cut back radically. Recurring items should be considered less frequently. We should impose a time limit on our statements, and we need to reform the structure of the committees and auxiliary bodies so as to avoid overlapping and duplication.

My country, Honduras, is continuing to work vigorously to strengthen, among other things, its democratic system of government, to bolster judicial power, to organize the national police under civilian rule, to modernize the State, in addition to striving to create a new frame of reference to promote development on the basis of full participation by all sectors of society.

Honduras, like all other developing countries, is deeply committed to processes designed to combat poverty and underdevelopment and to mobilize the potential of its peoples and resources in order to attain speedy, fair and sustained growth, working jointly to enhance the effect of national efforts through solidarity, cooperation and mutual confidence.

However, there are still many economic and financial obligations that need to be met in the short- and medium-term. International cooperation is steadily declining, and poverty indicators are becoming worse.

We wish to see a world where countries, mindful of their diversity, act together to attain common goals, a world in which peace, security and dignity will be the common heritage of all peoples, a world in which the advances of science will serve to benefit humankind and, in short, a world in which existing resources are used rationally in order to meet everyone's needs. This is our understanding of what, in essence, North-South cooperation should mean.

As the United Nations enters its second half-century, we have an opportunity to work towards the objective of its Charter — world cooperation in deterring and halting aggression — and to foster peaceful, productive and sustainable human progress. In this respect, "An Agenda for Development" offers a unique opportunity to make the issue of economic and social development a central priority of the multilateral system. Promotion of sustained economic growth and eradication of poverty in the developing countries, as well as the legitimate leadership that the United Nations should show in this field, must also be key objectives of the Agenda.

My country hopes that the negotiations on the Agenda for Development being held by the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly on An Agenda for Development will conclude promptly and successfully in the course of the fifty-first session of the Assembly. The completion of this work will be a point of departure because it will give rise to firm commitments and mark the beginning of the task of putting the actions agreed upon into practice.

Honduras, as a peace-loving country, reaffirms its total support for the principles and objectives seeking the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and to establish a universal, verifiable, multilateral and effective machinery that will help to promote nuclear disarmament and to prevent proliferation of such weapons in all its aspects.

Consistent with these principles, I am pleased to announce that Honduras has signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty at this session of the General Assembly, and I would venture to appeal to all States Members of the United Nations to sign it as soon as possible. We would also urge all States possessing nuclear weapons to take resolute steps to reduce them with a view to their elimination.

The existence of landmines and other undetonated explosive devices in various regions of the world is a tremendous humanitarian problem and a grave threat to the security, health and survival of the local population where these deadly devices have been scattered. These devices prevent the return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes in the States affected by this ongoing menace and impede humanitarian operations and programmes, national reconstruction and economic development activities and peacekeeping operations.

For this reason, we urge Member States, particularly those that have the capacity to do so, to lend their assistance to the affected countries, including those of the Central American region, with a view to establishing and refining national mine-clearance mechanisms. We also appeal to the international community finally to agree on the total prohibition of the production, exportation, sale and use of anti-personnel mines.

My delegation wishes once again to place on record its interest in seeing the Republic of China in Taiwan admitted as a Member of the United Nations. At this moment in time, when democratic systems of government and the rule of law are gaining ground in most of the nations that make up this Organization, it seems contradictory to continue excluding the Republic of China in Taiwan from participation. This is a country which struggled determinedly for democracy and succeeded in establishing it this year with the election of a Government by the direct vote of the majority of its people. This is a nation that respects human rights, possesses one of the strongest economies on earth and has been constantly struggling to eradicate poverty, and whose population of 21 million people enjoys an enviable cultural level. In short, the Republic of China in Taiwan fully meets the requirements established in the Charter for membership of the United Nations.

For the developing countries, its participation in the various international forums would be extremely beneficial, since we would be able to draw on its valuable experience in cooperation programmes, as demonstrated when it occupied a seat in this General Assembly from the day it signed the Charter until 1971.

In this respect, my Government supports the resolution adopted on 19 July 1996 by the European Parliament entitled the "Role of Taiwan in International Organizations", which explicitly states its support for the idea that the Republic of China in Taiwan should have a greater level of recognition and representation in international agencies. It also urges the United Nations to establish a working group to study the possibility of its participation in the activities of the United Nations and its international agencies.

The problem of drug production is not as severe in the Central American region as it is elsewhere, although our countries are not unaffected by drug use. For this reason, on 21 June, the Ministers of the Interior of our region agreed to develop a plan of cooperation to fight this evil. In this regard, we support the initiative of convening a special session of the United Nations General Assembly in 1998 in order to strengthen the international strategy to combat narcotic drugs.

With a view to beginning to address the problem of the efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations system, 1996 could be a year of meditation and reflection. Calls have been made for a redefinition of the purposes of the Organization and, in particular, of the tasks of the Security Council. In order to achieve this important task, we must work on the basis of a shared and balanced vision of the future of the Organization. The construction of a culture of international peace, security and prosperity should be the ultimate goal in this redefinition of tasks. This is something that the United Nations must accomplish in response to the needs of our peoples.

As we approach the end of the century and the millennium, the globality of economies and the grouping of countries into systems of integration are becoming irreversible facts. One consequence of this will be the resurgence of mega-States in which smaller States will remain submerged. We are concerned for the future of weaker and less developed nations which, like ours, require great external and internal efforts to retain the identity that distinguishes them from the rest of the world.

The right of peoples to decide their own destiny on the basis of sovereignty is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. This right must be observed in the new world order if we wish to preserve, as is our duty, peace and cultural plurality among nations.

The Acting President: I now call on the Ambassador, Permanent Representative and Head of delegation of the Republic of Rwanda, His Excellency, Mr. Gideon Kayinamura.

Mr. Kayinamura (Rwanda): Permit me to congratulate Mr. Razali Ismail on his unanimous election to preside over this session. His election is a reaffirmation by the United Nations Member States of the confidence that they have placed in him and in the Government of Malaysia. In this regard, I should like to assure him of the cooperation of the delegation of the Republic of Rwanda in our shared desire to galvanize the community of nations in their common resolve to fulfil the objectives of the United Nations Charter. I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, for presiding over the fiftieth session of the General Assembly in a most efficient and able manner.

The session over which Mr. Razali is presiding will be addressing a considerable agenda of more than 155 items, which, when put together, will contribute to world peace, security and stability. The United Nations is the most appropriate forum to discuss these and other related matters of global peace, development and international cooperation. The agenda before us therefore seeks to address the implementation of the objectives of the Charter, as enshrined in Article 1.

As we move towards the twenty-first century, it is our individual and collective responsibility to re-examine the extent to which our countries have or have not contributed to the attainment of these objectives. The United Nations Agenda for Peace and its valuable initiatives on peacekeeping, human rights and other development-related issues — collective security, terrorism, denuclearization, conflict prevention and resolution — will be discussed during the session. Rwanda would like to join its voice to those of the delegations that spoke from this rostrum and who called for world peace, security and the development of developing countries.

Statements have been made from this rostrum in connection with what some have described as the ghastly events that took place in Rwanda in 1994. Many, perhaps inadvertently and in a simplistic manner, have described the events of 1994 in Rwanda as a conflict, a crisis, ghastly events or as gross violations of human rights. There was genocide in Rwanda, nothing else but a genocide. It was not a tribal or ethnic conflict, as it is often referred to.

Between April and July 1994 more than one million Rwandans were butchered in a systematic and planned manner. This carnage was carried out in only 98 days. The devastating effects of the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide are still with us, and we live with them. Rwanda's population now consists of 70 per cent women, 60 per cent of whom are widows, and we have 400,000 orphans in the country.

The perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide are still at large in some capitals. Far from feeling remorse, they pride themselves in their unfinished agenda. Their army, militia and political leadership are in military and refugee camps within walking distance of the Rwanda-Zaire border. They have recently stepped up infiltrations into Rwanda in order to kill the remaining survivors of genocide.

We call upon the international community to exert pressure on the Government of Zaire to relocate the refugees away from its borders with Rwanda, in conformity with the 1951 Geneva convention (relating to the Status of Refugees).

The withdrawal of United Nations peacekeeping troops in April 1994, at the height of the execution of the genocidal agenda, was not helpful. For us in Rwanda, it remains, and will continue to remain, a reminder of the responsibility of the United Nations to ensure that this does not reoccur anywhere else. More importantly, it points to the need for the United Nations to support Rwanda in its efforts to rebuild its socio-economic infrastructure. This is critical. There can be no sustainable peace without reconstruction and development. The recent high-level symposium on conflicts in Africa, which was held in Tokyo this month, on 9 and 10 September, came to the same conclusion.

Allow me to put on record my Government's appreciation of the efforts made by those countries, institutions and humanitarian agencies that helped and continue to assist Rwanda in the various sectoral rehabilitation programmes. We are equally grateful to those who have shown their disposition to do so in the near future.

The recently concluded round table conference, which was organized with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has been helpful. We are grateful for the commitments that were made. This will go a long way in assisting Rwanda to consolidate and build on the achievements of the past two years.

The Government of National Unity of Rwanda, under the leadership of His Excellency President Pasteur Bizimungu, has made significant strides to return the country to normalcy. Tremendous achievements have been made, including the gradual and steady rehabilitation of the security structure, the judiciary, the legislature and the economy. The sound macroeconomic policies that have been adopted have contributed, in less than two years, to a reduction in inflation from 60 per cent in 1994 to 10 per cent in 1996. This will drop to 5 per cent by the end of 1997. Agricultural production has reached 70 per cent of the pre-war level, and we have recorded impressive levels of food production.

We are also pleased to inform the international community that more than 2.2 million refugees have now returned to Rwanda. All Rwandan refugees originally based in Burundi have been repatriated and successfully resettled in their own communities without incident. This is sufficient proof that Rwandan refugees in other neighbouring countries, apart from being the hostages of genocidal leaders in the refugee camps, have no other reasons to remain.

These achievements have been made in spite of some critical factors that the international community could help Rwanda overcome if we are to maintain the pace of our continuing progress towards stability, durable peace and development.

The crippling debt burden has hamstrung all social sectors, especially the most vulnerable groups. Children, women, widows and the elderly are among the most affected. Rwanda's debt stock at the end of 1995 stood at a staggering high of $1 billion, or 91 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP). Most of this, 84 per cent, is owed to multilateral institutions; 13 per cent is bilateral; and the remaining 3 per cent is on account of suppliers' credits. Given the magnitude of this suffocating debt, the Government cannot rebuild its shattered socio-economic infrastructure in the aftermath of genocide. We therefore urge the international community, and especially the multilateral financial and development institutions, to cancel immediately Rwanda's debt. Short of new resources in the form of a Marshall Plan, this cancellation would greatly contribute to Rwanda's recovery and sustainable growth. We know very well that where there has been a significant infusion of financial resources in post-war periods, peace and stability have been achieved and sustained.

The question of conflicts and insecurity in the Great Lakes region has been mentioned by many speakers. The situation in Burundi is cause for concern to many, especially the countries of the region. I should like in this regard to commend the efforts of the Organization of African Unity, the leaders of the region and all those who are involved in the search for a durable solution.

Regional instability has been complicated by the systematic persecution of Kinyarwanda-speaking Zaireans. This process was stepped up this year with the massacre of several North Kivu region Zaireans of Rwandese culture; others were forced to flee to Rwanda and Uganda. This persecution has recently been extended to the South Kivu region of Zaire, where, again, Kinyarwanda-speaking Zaireans have been subjected to brutal attacks by Zairean forces, along with former Rwanda Government soldiers and *interahamwe* militias, who did not finish but exported their genocidal and "ethnic cleansing" agenda.

Survivors of these attacks — predominantly women and children, as men and boys are either killed or imprisoned — have been forced to seek refuge in Rwanda. It is the responsibility of the Government of Zaire to unconditionally repatriate its nationals who are currently living in refugee camps in Rwanda. We call upon the international community to prevail upon the Government of Zaire so as to stop the systematic "ethnic cleansing" currently taking place in eastern Zaire. We further call upon the Government of Zaire to cease immediately its military aggression which has recently been directed against Rwandan territory.

We would like to pay tribute to Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, former President of the United Republic of Tanzania, for his unequivocal and genuine search for solutions, not only for Burundi, but also within the wider context of the Great Lakes region.

The problem is not the lack of solutions. What is lacking is the decisiveness to implement commitments voluntarily entered into. That is what should be addressed. In the case of the Great Lakes region, former Presidents Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Jimmy Carter of the United States of America and General Touré of Mali successfully managed to get the Heads of State and

Government to agree and sign solemn declarations on the modalities for solving the problems of the region.

At this session, we will be considering the re-election of the Secretary-General. My Government's position has been clear since Yaoundé, during the summit of the Organization of African Unity. We are not supportive of the re-election of the incumbent. Doing so would reward his failure to use the instruments of the United Nations Charter in order to come to the rescue of Rwandans during the genocide. Above all, it would be against the collective conscience of the Rwandan people to support the candidacy of the incumbent. But beyond these moral grounds, we believe that the election of a contested Secretary-General is not in the interest of the United Nations. It would jeopardize the functioning of an institution that needs to be strengthened.

The Acting President: I now call on the Ambassador, Permanent Representative and Chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Estonia, Mr. Trivimi Velliste.

Mr. Velliste (Estonia): Let me begin by congratulating Mr. Razali Ismail on his assumption of the office of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. I am confident that his valuable guidance will lead to the successful outcome of this session. He has the assurance of our full support.

As an introduction, let me recall that this September marks the fifth anniversary of Estonia's return to the international scene. It was five years ago that the Estonian blue, black and white tricolour was hoisted in front of this forum. That moment was equal in historic and emotional significance to the one 70 years earlier, in September 1921 in Geneva, when Estonia was welcomed as a new member of the League of Nations — an international organization whose history has taught the world many lessons.

The cold war is over. Nevertheless, the international community continues to seek further guarantees of a more secure future for our children and grandchildren. In this respect, Estonia would like to express satisfaction at the recent overwhelming support for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty adopted by the General Assembly. The signing ceremony at the United Nations on 24 September was an important milestone, a result of continued negotiations and at the same time a sign of hope for the future. We firmly believe that the Treaty can make an important contribution to preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and promoting international security. The United Nations must now give a clear response to people who want to live in a world free of any threats of nuclear weapons and other means of mass destruction.

Our world is facing new challenges. These new challenges require a renewed United Nations. At the last session, considerable efforts were made to reform the Organization. This work will continue during the current session. In fact, one of the principal goals of the session ahead of us will be to increase the effectiveness of the United Nations. Estonia welcomes the progress made in this area. There are still a number of ways by which the United Nations can further improve its performance. We attach particular importance to the review of the working methods of the functional commissions and expert groups and bodies of the Economic and Social Council, as well as to better coordination between the work of the Second and Third Committees.

Estonia is looking forward to active participation in United Nations-reform working groups. We attach specific importance to the financial reform of the Organization. Estonia is supportive of the view that the United Nations should be put on a sounder financial footing. Member States should make every effort to fulfil their obligation to pay their arrears without any conditions. At the same time, we share the understanding that the United Nations scale of assessments should be revised. The new scale of assessments must be fair and more transparent. It should also better reflect the fundamental principle of capacity to pay. We hope that the High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the United Nations will achieve a comprehensive and consensus solution to the current financial difficulties of the Organization.

The reform of the Organization will also include changes in the composition and working methods of the Security Council. We welcome the decision by the General Assembly mandating the relevant Open-ended Working Group to submit a report to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. At the same time, we hope that, along the lines of the mandate of the Working Group, Member States can bring about a resolution to the long-standing discussions on Security Council enlargement.

Peacekeeping continues to be one of the important activities of the Organization. Recent years have seen a changing role for United Nations peacekeeping missions. Today they have grown into manifold and diversified types of action. A new challenge for United Nations peacekeepers is dealing with internal conflicts throughout the world. In this respect, I would like to reiterate that regional peacekeeping efforts that are conducted under the auspices of the United Nations must remain under stringent United Nations control.

Estonia is continuing to take part in United Nations peacekeeping. This autumn we will increase our contribution to the United Nations peacekeeping forces by offering a company to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). The company will be deployed in the Norwegian battalion. The deployment is part of a joint project to develop a Baltic peacekeeping battalion. That battalion will be the contribution of the Baltic States to the strengthening of United Nations peacekeeping capacities. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the Governments that have contributed to this common Baltic project.

During the past year Estonia has taken further steps towards the implementation and follow-up of the major United Nations Conferences — Rio, Vienna, Cairo, Copenhagen, Beijing and Istanbul. To this end, a special inter-ministerial commission has been established in Estonia. Since the critical areas of concern of many of the conferences overlap, we are also looking forward to a better coordination of their outcomes.

Last year important work was done by the Preparatory Committee on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court in elaborating the text of a statute for such a court. We welcome that work and look forward to further progress during the fifty-first session.

Failure to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms is a major cause of conflict. Many intra-State conflicts arise from the denial of basic human rights. The Vienna World Conference on Human Rights made it clear that the promotion and protection of all human rights is a duty for all States. Estonia reaffirms its continued commitment to human rights. In spite of the hardships of institutional and economic transition, we have been able to make democracy a way of life. Human rights for all residents of Estonia is an inextricable part of Estonian democracy.

We continue to place particular importance upon the work of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. José Ayala Lasso, the Centre for Human Rights and United Nations human rights machinery in general. A transparent functioning of this machinery should rely on impartial reporting and disregard politically motivated allegations. Failure to do so would seriously damage the credibility of the Organization. Owing to very recent memories, this issue is of special importance to Estonia. This is also one of the reasons why Estonia lists among its priorities issues regarding indigenous peoples and human rights.

Estonia believes that it is essential to secure adequate financing for the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights. At the same time, we would like to point out that various regional organizations that focus on human rights issue periodic reports regarding such matters. In order to avoid duplication and to make effective use of resources, the United Nations human rights machinery should rely on the extensive expertise of regional organizations, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe. Those two organizations foster the basic foundations of security and stability in Europe. The United Nations should further enhance its ties with them, especially with the Council of Europe, the established stronghold of human rights on the European continent and a symbol of cooperation between nations striving for an open and mutually beneficial dialogue. Estonia, the current Chairman of the Council of Europe, is pursuing policies of positive engagement in relations with all countries, including our eastern neighbour. In this respect, it is our sincere hope that the Russian Federation will reciprocate our efforts.

In conclusion, let me underline our commitment to contribute, together with all Member States, to the establishment of a world community in which individuals and States may live in peace and understanding. Let me express our sincere hope for a better world.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I would like to note that, thanks to the praiseworthy punctuality of delegations, we have saved time, even though the list of speakers for this meeting was longer than usual: we have heard seven speakers instead of six. Thus, we can see that punctuality and the brevity of statements really do pay off.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.